

(FIRST)
1983 BANFT
INTERNATIONAL
STRING QUARTET
COMPETITION

RADIO TRANSCRIPTIONS

CBC ARTS NATIONAL

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SEMI-FINALISTS (7) ANNOUNCED AT THE END OF THIS PROGRAM.

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MAY 1
(Sunday)

Final competition / awards ceremony of April 31, hosted by
Dr. Paul Fleck, with pre-recorded comments from members of
all quartets left in the finals:

GYORGY EDER (Eder Quartet),
WILMA SMITH (Lydian Quartet),
SHARON PRATER (Colorado Quartet),
VERONIKA HAGEN (Hagen Quartet),
NICHOLAS MANN (Mendelssohn Quartet),

and a long intermission interview with MICHAEL VANN, Edmonton archetier, who was commissioned to make the set of bows for the winning quartet.

Taking part in the presentation ceremony: GILLES LEFEBVRE (Canada Cpuncil), VISCOMTE GUY DE LA CELLE (Courvoisier), RAPHEL HILLYER (jury member)

Performances:

EDER: *Haydn*, Op. 76, No. 5 in D Major
LYDIAN: *Bartok*, No. 3
COLORADO: *Beethoven*, Op. 18, No. 5 in A Major
HAGEN: *Mozart*, K. 589 in B Flat
MENDELSSOHN: *Beethoven*, Op. 95 in F Minor

N.B. In order to have a complete record of the awards ceremony, this transcript was taken from the complete, unedited tape of the proceedings. CBC had to remove some parts of the presentation ceremony because of time restrictions.

November 3 Previously unbroadcast material from the competition. Performances by the Mendelssohn, Lydian, Hagen and Colorado Quartets.

November 10 Colorado's Quartet's tour concert from St. Lawrence Centre, Toronto, broadcast "live".

Program includes an intermission interview with the quartet members.

STEREO MORNING

APRIL 22/83

Pre-competition program featuring interviews with judges (Raphael Hillyer, Emanuel Hurwitz, and Andrew Dawes) and members of the Brodsky, Colorado, Manchester, and Mendelssohn quartets.

"Stereo Morning"

CBC-FM

Friday, April 22, 1983

Announcer: I'm Terry Campbell and this is Stereo Morning. It's five minutes past nine, twenty-five minutes past the hour in Newfoundland. This Sunday the Banff Centre kicks off its International String Quartet Competition. Ten young quartets will be judged by six distinguished string players. One of the judges is from The Quartetto Italiano, one of the world's great ensembles. Here is the Quartetto Italiano, and the opening movement from Beethoven's Quartet in D, Opus 18, No. 3, and this is the standard the competitors at Banff will be trying to reach.

MUSIC

Announcer: The Quartetto Italiano and the opening movement from Beethoven's Quartet in D, Opus 18, No. 3. The first competition in North America created solely for string quartets opens for the first time this Sunday in Banff, Alberta. It's called the International String Quartet Competition and it celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the Banff Centre. Ten string quartets screened from 21 entries will compete for \$30,000. That handsome amount of prize money was donated by Couvoisier International. Today on Stereo Morning an introduction to the judges, the music, and the competitors of the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

MUSIC

Announcer: The music you're hearing is from a cassette identified only by a number -- one of the twenty-one entry auditions heard by a jury of three who determined just which of the ambitious young string quartets from as far away as Poland would be allowed to come to Banff to compete.

MUSIC

Paul Cassidy: We're going to Banff because, well of course it's such a beautiful place and we can't resist it. To be perfectly honest all I know about Banff is the beautiful poster which you sent over here and it just looks marvelous you know, with the Rocky Mountains in the background. But some friends of mine have been there to study and they loved it. They said it was such a marvelous place.

Announcer: Paul Cassidy from Manchester, England, one of the young musicians who are coming to compete at Banff. Thirty thousand dollars will be divided among the five finalists. In addition to money, the first place quartet will win a tour of Canada in November, a tour of the United States in 1984, and a matched set of specially made bows. Those are the official awards, but what other reasons bring these quartets to Banff? I spoke to Glen Garlick from Washington D.C.'s Manchester Quartet, Deborah Redding from New York's Colorado Quartet and Ira Weller from the Mendelssohn Quartet, also from New York.

Glen Garlick: We're looking forward to playing in Banff. We hope to get comments from the judges, all of whom are fine quartet players themselves. We're trying to improve ourselves as a quartet, also we're interested in meeting other quartets who are on our level. We need that kind of contact, we need to talk to people who are facing the same problems we are and trying for the same goals. Also, it gives us a goal to work toward. We're approaching this competition the way we did the Munich competition -- not to win it but to get as much out of it as we can.

Announcer: Is this the best way to get known?

Glen Garlick: I would say it's one of the quickest ways to get known. It's not so much the winning the competition, it's what you do with it after you've won.

Deborah Redding: They can be fun. It can be interesting. It can be very interesting to meet other quartets from around the world. As a matter of fact, the last competition we went to, probably the most rewarding thing we got out of the entire competition was hearing the two winners of the competition. There was a young group from Austria and one from Czechoslovakia, and the most exciting part of the competition for us was to hear those groups who were so wonderful and terribly inspiring and stimulating. It's fun to travel too!

Ira Weller: This particular competition involves concerts in Canada for the winners and that's something we very much want to do. We're playing between forty and fifty concerts this season in the United States but we have not played to any great degree in any other place except the United States and we would like to do that.

MUSIC

Announcer: One of the judges of this first Banff International String Quartet Competition is Raphael Hillyer, a founding member of the Juilliard Quartet. Mr. Hillyer now teaches young musicians at Yale and he thinks music competitions are an important testing ground.

Raphael Hillyer: I think it's very fine as a goal towards which to work for young artists, and by the time they've gone through this ordeal, even if they haven't won first prize, they've probably grown enormously as musicians; and having put themselves through this baptism of fire, probably have prepared themselves for a career in ways that other circumstances wouldn't have provided.

Announcer: Enticing as the rewards for the winners may be there's a price to be paid for entering a competition like this. All the contestants I spoke to were seriously aware of it. Getting to Banff is very expensive. Two qualifying quartets, the Academia from Poland and Locrian from England have already withdrawn because they couldn't afford the trip. And then there's the unusual case of the Manchester Quartet who are not from England but from Washington, D.C.

Glen Garlick: We have a special problem. We're going to be on tour with the National Symphony Orchestra in the Far East at the time the competition begins. We had to ask special permission from the music director, Rostropovitch, to be allowed off the last part of the tour to go to participate in Banff, and it's quite expensive to get from Hong Kong to Banff, as we discovered. Aside from those expenses, I should probably mention the emotional expense. All four of us are married and we have gotten a lot of support from our husbands and wives, but it's difficult when you're rehearsing all the time and at the same time holding down a job. It's quite time consuming and needs a lot of support and understanding.

Announcer: Other kinds of support in the form of sponsorship, grants and private foundation money have eased the financial problems for certain quartets, but some pressures are not so easily dealt with.

Ira Weller: Competitions are unpleasant, so immediately that's a strike against going anywhere to do a competition.

Deborah Redding: In a way, when you're preparing to do a competition, you're thinking not only about what this music means to you and what you would like to express with it, but what's going to be acceptable to the jury. And I don't feel that that's the most productive kind of music-making, entirely.

Paul Cassidy: The strain in doing a competition is really extraordinary. The only audience you have, normally, is a panel of judges. They've got a difficult job and perhaps they're not very enthusiastic. Musically they're not giving a great atmosphere to the conditions you're playing in, and we find that that is the worst thing about a competition really. I guess the only constructive thing we came up with was that we would simply go on and try our best to treat it as though it were a concert, as though everything was a recital, and just to look upon it as those lines, not look upon it as people who are trying to find something wrong with your playing, you know.

MUSIC

Announcer: Some say a music competition is only ^{as good as} its judges. The six judges at the Banff International String Quartet competition are all members, or former members, of famous string quartets: Ede Banda of the Tatrai Quartet, Andrew Dawes of the Orford Quartet, Piero Farulli of the Quartetto Italiano, Raphael Hillyer of the Juilliard Quartet, Emanuel Hurwitz of the Aeolian Quartet, and Mischa Schneider of the Budapest Quartet. They'll judge the contestants on eight works: two classical, two romantic, two modern, a work written especially for the competition by Canadian composer Harry Somers, and a free choice selection. Now that's a lot of music and it struck me that listening to all ten quartets play all this music may be the toughest job at Banff. Jury member Emanuel Hurwitz -

Emanuel Hurwitz: I think that it's only a gruelling experience if the time one has to spend is longer than is natural for one's concentration to keep up. Last year in one competition we started about 9:30 in the morning with two breaks, listened right through until 10:30 at night. And I felt that the day was a bit long to have good judgment. But usually it's tremendously stimulating. Every new ensemble that comes has got something different to offer and so it's a new experience each time. Normally it's not tiring, it's exciting.

Announcer: The judges will be listening to the competing quartets from 10:00 to 12:00 a.m., 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 to 10:00 each evening. What will they be listening for? Again Emanuel Hurwitz -

Emanuel Hurwitz: I think first of all, are they, as individuals, turned into one person -- a quartet as it were. It's very important. You can often have most brilliant executants and people with great musical understanding, but perhaps they might not have been together for very long; perhaps the quartet as an instrument itself hasn't yet jelled so to speak. The great classics are always the ultimate test. How well a string quartet can play the works of Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn. These are very important aspects because these are the, as it were, the life blood of music. And I think that we've all had the experience, and have had as young artists, of being very successful in the romantics and the moderns but finding it takes a long time to say "I can present a great work by Mozart or Beethoven feel thoroughly comfortable."

Announcer: You said that you'd be listening for four people melding, becoming one. What's involved in that process, for the four members of the quartet?

Emanuel Hurwitz: Well, first of all they, they have to have the intelligence and then the will to listen to each other, and then the ability to criticize each other without getting angry with each other and that really takes a lot of maturity. Of course people just have to get used to other people saying "that wasn't particularly good".

Announcer: The more I talked to the judges, the more I began to wonder if a good string quartet isn't made in heaven. Raphael Hillyer -

Raphael Hillyer: It takes a great deal of luck just to find the right group of people. Very recently, a number of people who are working with me in my neighbourhood are asking about how they could form a quartet. It's not an easy thing to say because you can have the greatest will and also the gifts for it but you have to find three colleagues at the right time and the right place at the right age with the right willingness to make some sacrifices at the beginning. If it works out, one could say it's made in heaven. But that's a very shorthand way of saying that everybody was very lucky to have met and have found that they are four really compatible people.

MUSIC

Announcer: The Banff Centre has a long history of nurturing young musicians, so this International String Quartet competition is a fitting way to celebrate the Centre's 50th anniversary. Over the years the Centre has changed from a holiday place to a serious school offering courses in all aspects of music. There are three or four applicants for every single place at Banff. The Academy of String Quartets, headed by Lorand Fenyves has been at Banff since 1972. This string quartet competition was developed to carry the name of the Banff Centre to music schools all over the world. The publicity material which included a picture poster of those beautiful mountains at Banff, drew a hundred enquiries and finally twenty-one serious entries with audition tapes. Not all groups could afford to make a sophisticated recording of their work and some of the tapes sound as though they were made on a little cassette machine in someone's livingroom. All were submitted independently to Lorand Fenyves, Tom Rolston and Zoltan Szekely for a blind judging. Interestingly, the three judges came up with an almost identical selection of thirteen suitable candidates. Of this thirteen, three had to withdraw for financial and other reasons. Curiously, none of the successful quartets is Canadian. I asked the only Canadian judge, Andy Dawes of the Orford Quartet, for his reaction:

Andy Dawes: I'm very surprised. Actually, it's funny, it's something we've been puzzling about for years because you know we've been together for eighteen years and we had a summer musical camp, Kelso Music Centre, for four years. It was a very intensive course and we've been teaching at the U. of T. and there are a lot of our former students that would like to do quartets, but somehow none of them ever form quartets. It's a strange thing for me, well for the four of us. We've discussed it often and I don't know why that is because in fact Canada is a very good place for nurturing young groups starting out. You've got the Canada Council which helps, and at one time they had the Assistance Program, so that if a quartet went to Sault Ste. Marie or Halifax, they would get a lot of help. So there was no problem with, say, living. You know CBC is very good about that -- picking up groups -- and still there's just tons of American quartets and no Canadians.

MUSIC

Announcer: Chamber music has been growing steadily in popularity during the past few years. There are more and more chamber groups, more small concert halls, and many more chamber dates on concert calendars. Raphael Hillyer told me that when the Juilliard Quartet began in 1946 there were no competitions. The challenge for that quartet was simply to survive. The chamber repertoire has its own special character and this in turn affects the musicians who play it and the contests which show it off. The chamber repertoire is different from that of the virtuoso solo repertoire. People who I spoke to pinpointed some of the differences.

Raphael Hillyer: The literature that the individual violinist or pianist plays -- Paganini for the violin and Liszt for the piano -- and a lot of required music that shows the virtuosity of the individual player, to show that the impossible can be done with great ease and brilliance. In the quartet literature there isn't anything like that. The people who have written quartets never had that in mind. In chamber music the ideas might be very happy ones but generally they're of a momentous serious nature. I think that it requires a certain maturity of the player to, to come to that.

Ira Weller: One's ego involvement in chamber music goes toward trying to discover what the composer intended, and to be the best, and your ego isn't involved in doing this, in being the best interpreter of that composer's intent. But the basic word is the composer's intent. As a soloist, because the music is not quite the same quality a large part of the time, the idea is to impose your personality rather than the composer's.

Emanuel Hurwitz: North America is still perhaps geared up to the idea of the solo virtuoso performer and the string quartet has an older European heritage, as people playing together just for the sheer pleasure of music.

Deborah Redding: I guess if I had to make a gross stereotype I would say that in order to play in a string quartet at all, and work successfully with three other people you have to have a certain amount of generosity of spirit to begin with, and you have to be a certain type of giving, sharing, sensitive type person just to be able to work in that extremely strenuous circumstance. And I think part of that carries over in the attitude towards competitions I suppose. A lot of us are playing string quartets because we love it and because it's fun and it's a community type experience and we enjoy sharing it with other quartets. The most fun at the competitions is when it's all over and everybody can be friends and have a good time.

Announcer: I wondered whether different styles of quartet playing prevail in different parts of the world. Some judges and contestants at Banff are from Europe and some come from North America. I could see the possibility for interesting tensions in this area. Deborah Redding from the Colorado Quartet -

Deborah Redding: We., from our own personal experience in the competitions we've found that the European groups tend to play with a much more transparent sound. They tend to play with less of an intense, dramatic aggressive type of approach to the music, which is more characteristic of the American style, especially in New York. I am speaking again in very crude stereotypes, but they listen for a more relaxed manner of interpretation; we tend to find that it's a little more adherent to the score and the tradition of classical music making, whatever that is. The sound is not so rich and fat and full and -- I don't want to say focused because the European sound is very focused -- but the American sound tends to be more pressed and more intense, as is the music-making itself.

Emanuel Hurwitz: There are probably six or seven or eight different styles. I would say that from what I've heard, the finest string quartets in North America tend to start off with the individual players having attained a greater mastery of their instruments than they would have done in England. In England they would have decided to play string quartets before they had really finished their studentship and apprenticeship, and while they were becoming a quartet at the same time be struggling and endeavoring to improve their own individual capabilities.

MUSIC

Announcer: Do musicians hear, in their heads at least, the perfect sound? Is there an ultimate quartet sound?

Lorand Fenyves: I think after a while when you are over a certain age -- let's say over thirty or so -- then you begin to understand more and more the futility of "perfection", and what is really important is the difference, is the discrimination, is the variety.

Emanuel Hurwitz: I have quite often imagined this, that I could say that this perfect sound would be quite different say for a Bartok quartet to a Brahms quartet and then to a Haydn quartet. I wouldn't like to think of just one sound, one sonority; there are many perfect sounds. Perhaps, ironically enough, you can say that if something is too completely perfect. There must also be a certain amount of gamble, a certain amount of risk, in playing to make a real concert excitement.

Raphael Hillyer: You know one of the marvelous things about music, about classical music, is that great performances can be offered of the classical works or the modern classics and be very different from one another. After all, quartets have been played for several hundred years and I'm sure that there were fine performances done a couple of hundred years ago, but very different from what are being done today. In our own lifetime there have been a couple of dozen excellent quartets who've played the same pieces and I'm sure they were beautifully done but different from one another. I guess each person has his or her idea of what is extremely good, but I would like to think that we are all open to different approaches and perhaps very eager to hear something that we've never heard before.

Announcer: This morning you've heard from some of the judges and contestants at the International String Competition which takes place at the Banff Centre starting this Sunday. If you live within reach of the Centre you'll be more than welcome to sit in on the competition. Admission is free. If you don't live in the area Arts National on CBC stereo will be broadcasting from Banff beginning this Monday. They'll bring you both music and interviews every evening and of course we'll keep you up on the results here on Stereo Morning. This is an exciting Canadian first and in face of this high-powered competition it may surprise you to hear what most of the contestants and judges are most looking forward to at Banff.

Andy Dawes: Well first of all I love Banff. You know I'm from near there, I love the Foothills, and you know when you're sitting in the Banff Centre there, looking over the mountains, it's just wonderful.

Glen Garlick: I grew up in Colorado and got to experience the Rockies at a different place, but when I see the mountains out here on the East coast I'm always telling my wife these are not mountains.

Ira Weller: I've only seen pictures of the area around Banff. It looks awesome.

MUSIC

Announcer: More music from one of the auditioned cassettes for the Banff International String Quartet Competition. The Eder quartet from Europe, one of the competing groups at the Banff Competition, has made two commercial recordings, and right now, after all the music for four musicians, I'm going to double our fun and feature the Eder Quartet and the Kreuzburger Quartet in the Allegro, Larghetto and Finale from Louis Spohr's Double Quartet No. 1 in D minor.

MONDAY
April 25, 1983

Announcer: Good Evening and welcome to Arts National. I'm Ian Alexander.

MUSIC (Instruments Tuning Up)

Alexander: This evening and every night this week Arts National is coming to you on location from backstage in the Margaret Greenham Theatre at the Banff Centre, School of Fine Arts in Banff, Alberta. We're here to bring you all the energy and excitement and wonderful music making of the Banff International String Quartet Competition, the first event of its kind, being held in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the Banff Centre.

What you're hearing right now in the background is one of the ten young string quartets, all of them under 35 years of age, suffering through the final tense moments before their first appearance on Day One of the competition. The stage manager has ushered them into the green room, and very soon now she'll beckon them through another door directly onto the stage into the glare of the lights. That glare can't quite hide the fact that up there in the back rows of the audience sit six distinguished, imposing, internationally renowned judges, their ears and pencils poised and ready to adjudicate the quartets' performances. The atmosphere is electric because this is the highest, most demanding level of international competition. It's an ordeal which for the competitors is a kind of final ritual of musical maturity. As one young violinist said to me, it's worse than meeting your girlfriend's parents for the first time.

On Arts National this is Day One of the Banff International String Quartet Competition. Throughout the next seven successive evenings, including special programs this coming weekend, we'll follow the ten young quartets who've already proven themselves just by making it this far. We'll talk with them, we'll listen to them play every day as they compete for \$30,000 in prize money, a major North American tour, and above all the international musical prestige and attention which will accrue to the top place finishers here at Banff.

Alexander: Days One and Two we're going to introduce you to all ten participating quartets. And we'll sample their first performances before the jury and the public. This is the freestyle round when each quartet can play a work of its own choice from any musical period. On succeeding days they must choose from predetermined categories, and on one day all ten quartets will play the same imposed competition piece. And then as the weekend approaches the difficult choices will start to be made as some quartets are eliminated for the semi-final and final rounds of competition. Of the ten quartets seven are from North America. There's one each from England, Austria and Hungary. We'll meet five of them today and the rest tomorrow. And I think you'll find, as we have already, that the standard of playing throughout is consistently and astoundingly high.

Alexander: Our first quartet on this first day is the Mendelssohn Quartet, formed in 1979. Among its four young members is second violinist Nicholas Mann. He's the son of Robert Mann founding first violinist of the renowned Juilliard String Quartet. Mann Sr. founded his quartet in New York in 1946, and 33 years later his son embarked on the same long and arduous process. The new quartet is named for the composer Felix Mendelssohn -- perhaps an obvious reason for choosing to play a Mendelssohn Quartet in their first competition appearance?
Nicholas Mann:

Nicholas Mann: Actually not. We have a problem. Since our name is the Mendelssohn when we play Mendelssohn on a concert everyone says we must play one in every concert and when we don't, everyone says, "Well then why are you named the Mendelssohn?" Of course if we didn't think we played the Mendelssohn

decently we'd be in trouble, but we picked Mendelssohn because basically we've played this piece a lot and we feel it's an easy piece to work out your nerves on. Certain pieces, like a Mozart Quartet, tend to be much more difficult under stress, whereas if you're playing a louder more exciting piece you can use the nerves to help you.

Alexander: Are there in fact lots of nerves this first round?

Nicholas Mann: I think probably the most in the first round. I mean it is like breaking the ice. You have to get a sense of what the hall is like with the audience and with the jury in there. Even though this competition is set up very well in that you can almost treat it like a performance in that you play a full work and there is clapping and an audience, but still in your mind you know that it's not how the audience liked it, but the five or six people judging you.

Alexander: Tell me a little bit about the Mendelssohn Quartet. You haven't been playing together that long I don't think.

Nicholas Mann: This is our fourth season together. We were founded at a school in New York called the Hebrew Arts School and it sort of gained momentum after a while. We were doing a couple of concerts and then we tried out for the Young Concert Artists Awards, which we won in 1981 and since then it's been very successful.

Alexander: The surname of Mann is one that's not unknown to people who like chamber music I think.

Nicholas Mann: That's true. I'm following in my father's footsteps and I can't say that I don't enjoy it. 'Cause I love it! I knew what I was getting into so...

Alexander: We in fact met Robert Mann on Arts National not that long ago on a live concert in Toronto. I'm wondering whether it was assumed from the beginning, from the cradle, that Robert Mann's son would play chamber music.

Nicholas Mann: If anything it was the opposite because he was so worried that he might push me in that direction. But he kept his hands off and said you play if you want to and so it actually took me longer than most violinists or musicians to decide that's what I wanted.

Alexander: And is it true to assume that not only for yourself but for the Mendelssohn Quartet that chamber music will be the prime area of interest for some time to come?

Nicholas Mann: I think that without a question you could say that.

Alexander: Nicholas Mann, of the Mendelssohn Quartet. And now that quartet is ready to move from the green room on to the stage. And from our backstage vantage point we'll be able to hear the audience greet them as they arrive.

(clapping)

Alexander: And now why don't we quickly move to the front of the house ourselves here in the Margaret Greenham Theatre at the Banff Centre? A total of six hours of string quartet performances daily, throughout this Banff International String Quartet Competition. And here on Arts National, Day One of the competition is under way, as we prepare now to hear the Mendelssohn Quartet from New York. They'll be playing the first movement, marked Allegro Vivace,

from the String Quartet in D Major, Opus 44, No.1, composed by Felix Mendelssohn.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: We've just heard the first movement of the String Quartet in D Major, Opus 44, No.1, by Felix Mendelssohn -- a Mendelssohn Quartet played by the Mendelssohn Quartet, four young New Yorkers, Laurie Smukler and Nicholas Mann - violins, Ira Weller - viola, and Marcy Rosen - cello. One of ten young string quartets participating in this Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

Alexander: Arts National is broadcasting on location all week from this major new musical competition, which has already distinguished itself in several ways. There's the size of the prize purse, \$30,000 in all, donated by Courvoisier, to be divided among the top five quartets. There is the pre-eminence of the six-member jury panel -- I'll talk to you more about them individually later on. There is the sheer quantity of music to be played, five performances to be played by each quartet before any eliminations at all for the semi-finals and finals. And then of course there are the quartets themselves. They are already the top one tenth of all those who initially inquired. They are in a word the youthful crème de la crème of this generation of string quartets right around the world. The competition rules require that all participants be under 35 years of age but some are much younger than that, like our next quartet, the Hagen String Quartet from Salzburg, Austria. Three of its four members are brothers and sister, their average age nineteen and a half. Their father is principal violist of the Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra; they all study at the Mozarteum. Violist Veronika Hagen, a vivacious teenager following, like Nicholas Mann of the Mendelssohn, in her father's footsteps, says that the Hagen Quartet is a real family quartet. It's been playing together for most of its members' young lives.

Veronika Hagen: We are four children. We have an older sister, she is twenty-two, but she married. And when we were five, six years old Lukas started to play the violin because he had strong tendons in his left hand and so father, who is a musician -- he is a violist in the Mozarteum Orchestra -- decided to let him play the violin and then our elder sister heard it and she wanted to, and then I came and afterwards, after two years, our youngest brother began to study the violoncello.

Alexander: Have you participated in competitions like this before?

Veronika Hagen: Last year we took part in the competition in Portsmouth. And we won the first prize and the audience prize. We got to know about Banff through the competition in Portsmouth. Afterwards people wrote to us and asked if we wanted to take part in this competition. We couldn't decide for a long time because we wanted to do our final examinations in the Mozarteum in Salzburg where we are studying. But in the last moment, I think it was the last week, we enrolled for the competition.

Alexander: What have you done about your examinations? Have they been postponed until you return?

Veronika Hagen: Yes. We postponed it until Autumn.

Alexander: One last question. I think you are the youngest quartet of the ten competing. Do you have a feeling of being younger? Or is it all equals here?

Veronika Hagen: It's just a feeling. The others ask "who is the youngest?" But we are musicians and we are here to play music. We don't look to see who is older and we don't expect the jury includes that or ... how to say?...

Alexander: Takes that into account.

Veronika Hagen: Yes. I hope they don't. I hope we don't need it.

Alexander: We hope not too, we'll be following you through the week. Thank you very much.

Veronika Hagen: Thank you.

Alexander: And now here is this youngest of our ten competing quartets, the teenage Hagen Quartet from Austria.

For their opening freestyle work the Hagen Quartet has chosen to perform the String Quartet No.2, Opus 10, by Hungarian composer Zoltan Kodaly. This quartet dates from the First World War. It's in two movements and is relatively seldom played, although it is known for its difficulty. Now that makes it a calculated risk for this opening round because a good performance of course is all that much more impressive, but the chances for error are likewise increased. So let's hear now how the Hagen Quartet handles the challenge they've set themselves here at the Banff International String Quartet Competition, as we join the judges and the audience and listen to them play the Quartet No.2 by Kodaly.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: String Quartet No.2, Opus 10, by Zoltan Kodaly played by the Hagen Quartet from Austria, three teenage siblings and their friend from the Mozarteum in Salzburg -- Lukas, Veronika, and Clemens Hagen and Annette Bik. And I think it's safe to say that already at Day One the Hagen Quartet is one of the popular favorites here at the Banff International String Quartet Competition which is coming to you on Arts National direct from the Banff Centre, School of Fine Arts in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta.

(clapping)

Alexander: The splendored physical setting, with its million dollar view of river and mountains and trees and sky, is of course one of the attractions of the Banff Centre. But another is the high standard of instruction which has been established here over the past half century since the Centre was founded. As part of their 50th Anniversary Celebrations the Banff Centre wanted to stage a major event with an international profile which would continue and extend their tradition of bringing the worlds greatest creative performers and teachers together with the most promising young artists. And the result was the Banff International String Quartet Competition. The man who's spent the past two years preparing for this week of intensive competition and other activity at Banff is Ken Murphy - he's Assistant Director of Music at the Banff Centre and he serves as the competition administrator. It's his job now to make sure that everything runs smoothly, and I have to say that so far he's succeeded wonderfully well. I talked with Ken Murphy and I wondered if he and his colleagues at the Centre saw this String Quartet Competition as a way of increasing Banff's

already considerable international profile in music education -- a way in other words of helping to put Banff firmly on the world cultural map.

Ken Murphy: I hope so. That's one of the things I had in mind when I proposed it. All staff were asked to proposed Anniversary projects and this was mine, and that was certainly what I had in mind.

Alexander: Are you finding in fact that when you were, when you put out the word initially that there were a lot of people who just didn't have a sense of where Banff was or what it was?

Ken Murphy: Oh, absolutely. In fact even recently one member of one of the quartets phoned to know if we had electricity up here that she could plug her hair-dryer into. (laughing)

Alexander: Let's take people very briefly through the process. I know that a couple of years of your life has been largely devoted to preparing for this week. The stages which culminated in ten quartets in being here this week. Briefly what are they?

Ken Murphy: Well, how long have we got? O.K., the first thing was to secure the money, and make sure that we did have financial backing. We drew up a proposal, we put to both the Federal and Provincial Governments and they said yes they would go along with it if we could also get some private funding -- you know to show that we were serious about it, and we did all those things. That's more than two years ago. And then the thing was to publicize it. It's a new competition and Banff as I say is not that well known, let's be frank about it. "Banff? Well why would we want to go to a competition in Banff? Where is Banff? What's that? I thought you skied there". It was a massive publicity campaign with beautiful posters and brochures in ten languages, which we sent to literally every music school in the world, and also to every individual teacher of stringed instruments and coaches of chamber music in the world. So I assure you there is not a string quartet or a coach of string quartets in the world who did not know about this competition by the time it was a year ahead of it. But still we had no way of knowing if there would be any response to it, and actually very little happened until very close to the end, the sort of deadlines. I should know, having been a musician, that musicians don't act right away, they act when they have to. And so towards the deadline we started to get tapes and applications and so on. And then the procedure was to filter those out and decide who would come. Now we could have taken all of them, we didn't get that many, we had about a hundred serious inquiries but only twenty-one actual applications with the money down and everything. And we could have taken all, we could have taken twenty-one, but it's a long way to come. It costs lots of money to buy airplane tickets and things now-a-days, and there is really no point in bringing people here if they haven't got a real chance of winning. So we were turning down quartets who had made it -- not only made it into other competitions -- but had been winners in other competitions -- were even turned down here.

Alexander: That's one of the other things about keeping the numbers small, and of course you are going for an entire week, in that each quartet is going to be heard several times even before any elimination takes place.

Ken Murphy: That's right. I've been to other competitions, in another capacity (working for the CBC as a matter of fact!) -- covering them. And I thought it was just awful. Somebody would come out and play ten minutes of Bach. They'd come all the way from Warsaw or God knows where and they're through, they're sent home! It's absolutely cruel. That kid may have been the best Chopin player in the world -- but nobody ever found out. So that was one thing I was determined, that nobody was going to be eliminated until they'd played at least

an hour and a half of music. So that's why we kept it small, so they could do that. My colleague, Tom Rolston, the Director of Music, said "Look, decide how many you want and take a few more because there are bound to be dropouts". So I decided I wanted ten and I sort of worked out the hours -- how much time would allow us to hear them all play a lot of music. So then we picked thirteen, and three dropped out for financial reasons.

Alexander: So you have your ten, and this is Day One which we're calling the freestyle day because quartets are playing a work of their choice and getting to feel the hall and getting into the whole situation. Led us through from Day Two on, what will we be facing day by day? What will they be facing?

Ken Murphy: O.K. As you say this is the ice-breaking day. Very important, that. Tomorrow, the second day, is the Classical day. They play Mozart, Haydn, or Beethoven Opus 18, the first six Lobkowitz quartets. The third day is Romantic. They can play any Romantic work from the nineteenth century or the other Beethoven quartets, which bridge that gap between the Classical and the Romantic schools. On the third day they play a twentieth century work. We were a little dissatisfied with that. They were very unadventurous, young people are very conservative, very conservative. We have a lot of Bartok, very few really experimental works, only one really, Betsy Jolas - "Neuf Etudes", played by the Lydian Quartet from the States. That's really the only experimental work. We have Kodaly, Bartok and so on. Anyway, that's up to them. And then the day after that is the imposed work -- Harry Somers' commissioned work the "Movement for String Quartet" which is enormously difficult. It's not going to make the hit parade, I'll tell you that, but it's a good piece, it's well crafted and it's a real test of what they can do in a relatively short time.

Alexander: I think there is a story, excuse me Ken, behind your getting that quartet -- those scores -- to your competitors.

Ken Murphy: Yes, at most competitions you come and learn the imposed piece on the spot. There are so many stupid traditions with competitions. We started from scratch, we didn't bother with any of them -- and one of them is that of learning the piece when you get here. What's the point? I mean what's that go to do with real life? So we decided that we'd give it to them six weeks in advance, and so we sent all the scores and parts to the Embassies or Canadian Consulates in the countries concerned and told them to release it to certain names on a certain date, so they all went troopin' in to the Embassies in Vienna and so on ...

Alexander: ... and at noon, Greenwich mean time, ten copies of the Quartet went out ...

Ken Murphy: You should ask some of the quartets what it was like you know when they opened that package and saw it -- I'm sure they fainted. It's a tough piece, you know, you play four against five against six against seven -- so difficult that he's cued the first violin part into the other parts, so they'd have something to hang onto as they went along.

Alexander: I'm wondering with these six quartet players as the jury and all these fine young quartet players here; will there at some stage toward the end be the opportunity for interaction? I presume that judges and contestants are pretty strictly isolated right now.

Ken Murphy: Oh they are. They are forbidden to even consult with each other, now that the competition has started. I mean they had breakfast together before it started and so on. It's funny, the Hungarian quartet told me, "Oh, we saw Mr. so and so from Hungary -- but we just said "Hello!"

Alexander: I wonder though at some late stage will there be notes and that sort of thing?

Ken Murphy: Only after it's over. We're going to call a meeting and those who want to meet with the judges will come in the day after the competition and sit down and they'll say what they recommend that they do.

Alexander: You've had two years to prepare for this, we are in Day One, is it going pretty much as you imagined -- the ideal playing out of this, or are there problems, have there been surprises?

Ken Murphy: It's going better. I had imagined there'd be all sorts of hitches and so on and I had no idea of the standard would be like that. I'll tell you who I wouldn't want to be; it's O.K. being the organizer, it must be hell to be the judges. I would't know what to do, honestly wouldn't.

Alexander: Ken Murphy, we'll be touching base with you throughout the week. Thanks a lot.

Ken Murphy: Thank you.

Alexander: You're listening to Arts National from CBC Stereo. I'm Ian Alexander and I'm speaking on behalf of our entire on-location team. We're broadcasting direct from the Banff Centre all week long to bring you the action of the Banff International String Quartet Competition. This is Day One, the first of two days which we're devoting to meeting each of the ten competing quartets and hearing them play. Later in the week the competition will focus on the Classical, Romantic and Modern repertoires in turn as the judges gain an increasingly clear picture of the individual quartets' varying strengths and weaknesses in these different repertoires as they prepare to make those difficult decisions Ken Murphy was talking about -- difficult because of the high standard of all ten quartets. They have to be made though as we select semi-finalists and finalists. Throughout the week then, much splendid music to be played by these young quartets, all of them under 35 years of age, and included in the 40 individual players in the ten quartets no less than 21 women, more than 50%. That's a surprising statistic to anyone who's familiar with the largely male-dominated world of the string quartets of the past. Our next quartet like all but one of the ten ensembles in the competition includes at least one woman. In this case that's Erika Toth of the Eder Quartet, that quartet formed in 1973 by graduates of the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, Hungary. Also, like the Austrian Hagen Quartet we heard a little earlier, the Eder Quartet is also a family affair. Cellist, Gyorgy Eder explains:

Gyorgy Eder: There are two Eders and two Toths in the quartet. The two Eders are brothers but the two Toths are not related. But the point is that Pal Eder, the first violinist, is married to the Erika Toth, the second violinist.

Alexander: Do you think that the fact that there are these personal connections means that there are closer musical connections in the quartet?

Gyorgy Eder: I don't think it makes more trouble because when we are fighting, for instance, there are both musical, professional and family problems.

Alexander: That call all ...

Gyorgy Eder: It can help, but sometimes it's worse.

Alexander: Tell me, you've had some previous experience with competitions like this one?

Georgy Eder: Of course. We won the Evian competition in '76 and the Munich competition the following year. We take part in this competition because we decided to study with Mr. Zoltan Szekely, the former leader of the Hungarian Quartet, the late Beethovens, and we spent three months here in Banff studying with him, and then we were asked to stay here one more month to take part in this competition, and it's a big experience because we don't know anything about the American Quartets. But we would never come just for the competition.

Alexander: And now from Hungary, the Eder Quartet arrives on stage at the Banff Centre for their first string quartet competition performance. And it's interesting to see how each quartet approaches the decision of what to play for their opening appearance. The Mendelssohns played Mendelssohn, the Hagens chose a difficult Kodaly Quartet. Now the Eders select a piece which could pose difficulties for a quite different reason. It's the Quartet in D Major, Kochel 575 by Mozart -- a very familiar work to which every hearer, including the judges, must bring a wealth of previous experience perhaps even some preconceptions. Here is this Mozart quartet played in competition by Hungary's Eder Quartet.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: That was the String Quartet in D Major, Kochel 575 by Mozart, the first of his last group of three quartets subtitled, "The Prussian Quartets". It was played by the Eder Quartet from Hungary, first violinist Pal Eder, his wife Erika Toth, second violin, viola Zoltan Toth -- no relation to Erika, and cellist Gyorgy Eder, Pal's brother and Erika's brother-in-law, if you're following me. That was no ordinary performance but a Day One competition performance here at the Banff International String Quartet Competition. It's interesting that many of the ten quartets competing this week here in Banff, Alberta have previous ties to the Banff Centre and in particular to the Academy of String Quartets headed here since its inception in 1972 by violinist Lorand Fenyves. The Eder Quartet who we just heard spent several months here recently intensively studying the late Beethoven quartets with artist-in-residence Zoltan Szekely, thirty-five year leader of the Hungarian String Quartet. A bit ironic that these young Hungarians should have come half way around the world to tap into the quartet tradition of their senior compatriot. And our next quartet to be heard in Day One of the Banff competition also has close ties to Banff indeed they were formed here and they take their name from a local landmark -- they're the Vermilion Quartet and their cellist Rolf Gilstein is the only Canadian citizen among the forty string quartet players here to compete. There is also one Canadian on the jury panel, Andrew Dawes from the Orford String Quartet. Rolf Gilstein and I were speculating about why there wasn't a higher level of Canadian representation at this new Canadian quartet competition.

Rolf Gilstein: Well most of the famous schools right now are in America, and there's tremendous competition, not only in the schools, for orchestra positions, there are so many soloists in America, and Canada is still very young in this regard and I think it's just a matter of time before the major centers -- Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary -- start to build in this area. So far we're still into sports and into politics and we haven't quite reached out in this direction. I think this is the next step.

Alexander: This quartet did in fact come together, though, here at Banff, did it not?

Rolf Gilstein: Yes we did. In really the most ideal place perhaps in the world for musicians to come together, to have all the time to direct themselves towards their own goals, and the administration does anything they can to help you in

your specific area. The Banff Centre has a tradition of chamber music, with the Hungarians coming, Zoltan Szekely and Lorand Fenyves. There's really a feeling here that this is the place for chamber music. You would think that when all you have to do is get up in the morning, practice, go over to the cafeteria -- everything's supplied, there're even maids for the bedrooms, there's all the time in the world just to focus in on music -- you would think you would after a while become slack with your discipline, but the opposite happens here. It becomes the most intense musical drive I think that I've ever experienced. The last two years we've hardly even had time to go on a hike here.

Alexander: As a quartet with such close ties to Banff, do you feel that that puts any particular pressure on you here at this competition, or does it maybe make it a little easier for you? It's a situation that at least you're familiar with.

Rolf Gilstein: Well perhaps it's different with every one of us. For me, it feels like coming home, and so the competition aspect is toned down a little because we have so many friends here, and it really feels like we're coming home to show everybody what we've accomplished in the meantime.

Alexander: That was Rolf Gilstein of the Vermilion Quartet. He's joined now by his three colleagues as they make their first appearance at the Banff competition. Three of the ten quartets chose to use the music of Bela Bartok for their Day One performance before the jury. The Vermilion Quartet has selected Bartok's String Quartet No.5, composed in 1934. Here to play it -- Mary Kathryn Parker and Melinda Moncure, violins, Richard Marshall, viola, Rolf Gilstein, cello. The Vermilion Quartet:

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: String Quartet No.5, by Bela Bartok, played by the Vermilion Quartet, formed recently here at the Banff Centre, now in residence at Northern Illinois University, but back in Alberta for this Banff International String Quartet Competition, and they have many friends here where they've just made their first competition appearance.

(clapping)

Alexander: Just before we hear the last of the five young quartets to whom we're introducing you on Day One of Arts National's Banff Competition coverage, I should at least mention the names of the six prestigious jury members for whom the quartets are playing and who will judge their performances. Truly an international, all-star panel: Andrew Dawes, first violinist of Canada's Orford Quartet, cellist Ede Banda from Hungary's Tatrai Quartet, Piero Farulli from Quartetto Italiano, Raphael Hillyer the founding violist of the Juilliard Quartet in New York, Emanuel Hurwitz from England, and Mischa Schneider, 35-year veteran of the Budapest Quartet. As the week unfolds we'll be hearing more from and about the jury. The competitive spirit among the contestants, of course intense, but tempered too by another mood, one of camaraderie, sort of, "we're all in this together". Members of different quartets listen to and warmly applaud each other. They meet informally over meals and walks and games of shuffleboard. Indeed this very interaction is what attracted many of them to Banff including Renee Tegel, violinist with the Da Vinci Quartet.

Renee Tegel: In the past two years the Da Vinci Quartet has been in Milwaukee and we just moved to Colorado Springs this past September.

Alexander: That was because there was an artist-in-residence appointment for all of you.

Renee Tegel: We're artists in residence at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. We're also co-sponsored by the Colorado Springs Symphony Orchestra.

Alexander: Now you described yourselves as artists-in-residence rather than as a quartet-in-residence. Is there a distinction there?

Renee Tegel: Apparently, according to the books there is. But basically what we do -- we're the quartet in residence, we're the only ones there -- and we give a lot of noonday concerts during the school year and evening concerts up at the University and we offer a quartet literature class for the University as well as private lessons.

Alexander: As someone who has been coached by fine quartets in quartet performance and is now going on to work in that area itself and work with still younger students, what's important? What do you look to get out of a quartet? I think, for instance, you've worked with the Fine Arts Quartet. What can a senior quartet give a younger group?

Renee Tegel: The experience, and their experience in loving music, and how not to go too far with it. Yes the Fine Arts Quartet gave us a lot of guidance on how to run the quartet -- businesswise as well as, you know, just rehearsing and how to learn the music. When you try to form a quartet, you don't know what you're getting into. You think you're going to go in there and take your fiddle and go play it with three other people. But if you want to be a serious quartet there is more to it than that. You have to figure out who's going to do what job, and when you take road trips who's in charge of the maps, who's in charge of hotels and things like that. There's so much to it that we didn't realize until we got into it and it's O.K., we're real lucky that we're able to divide up the jobs and everybody's competent. They can handle that.

Alexander: What prompted you to come to Banff?

Renee Tegel: We.., last spring we went to the Portsmouth competition and we were knocked out in the first round. But we had a wonderful time there and we met our peers. We met quartets from around the world, they're about our age and they want the same thing we do. They want to make a career at quartet playing. And besides the experience of meeting these people we also got to listen to them and it was a real positive experience for us. And we heard about the Banff competition, it's a beautiful area, the judges are -- they know what they're doing, and it was just -- we wanted to do it because it's a good experience for a quartet coming up here meeting all the people, listening to all the music being played as well as preparing for it, because you prepare every note when you come to a competition.

Alexander: That's Renee Tegel from the Da Vinci Quartet. They play now the Allegro Finale from Mozart's String Quartet in C Major, K.465

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: The Allegro Finale from Mozart's String Quartet in C Major, K465, played by the Da Vinci Quartet, the last of five young string quartets we've heard tonight on Arts National as we brought you Day One of the Banff International String Quartet Competition on location direct from Margaret Greenham Theatre at the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts in Banff, Alberta. The competition continues all week and Arts National will be here to cover it. Tomorrow, Day Two, when we meet the five other quartets who are here competing for the coveted final prize positions. From Banff I'm Ian Alexander saying, "Good night, for Arts National".

TUESDAY

April 26, 1983

MUSIC (Mendelssohn Quartet Rehearsing)

Alexander: Good evening, welcome to Arts National. I'm Ian Alexander, I'm speaking to you on location from the Margaret Greenham Theatre at the Banff Centre, School of Fine Arts in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta. This is the sound of a string quartet in rehearsal. They play a phrase or two they stop to discuss it, they make adjustments, then they try it again. It's a familiar enough sound of Banff that wafts out of many practice studios including some built of local wood and set off by themselves secluded amongst the trees on the side of the hill like tiny rustic cabins. After all, this has been the home for more than ten years of the world famous Banff Academy of String Quartets. This particular rehearsal has a special edge to it though, because after it the quartet must come on stage and play before an audience of their peers plus six internationally famous judges, at Day Two of the Banff International String Quartet Competition. (Rehearsal continues under the following).

Arts National is on location at the Banff International String Quartet Competition for a total of seven successive evenings. All this week and right through the weekend as well. We'll be following the progress of the ten young string quartets who auditioned successfully to come here and perform, to compete for \$30,000 in cash prizes, a matched set of instrument bows estimated to be worth another \$20,000, and a major North American Tour. Yesterday we met five of the quartets and we heard them play. The Mendelssohn from New York, the Hagen from Salzburg, the Eder from Budapest, the Vermilion from Illinois and the Da Vinci from Colorado. We found out a bit about the aspirations of these young musicians, all of them 35 years old or less and some much younger than that. And we heard just how high the level of musicianship is at this competition which is being held for the first time as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations here at the Banff Centre. And tonight Arts National presents five more world class young string quartets the rest of the field of competitors on Day Two of the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

MUSIC (Rehearsal up, then under the following)

Alexander: We continue tonight with the opening freestyle round of this competition. This is where the quartets pick their own repertoire before going on in succeeding days to determined works and categories. And our first group tonight -- the Manchester Quartet, confusingly perhaps they're not from Manchester, England, they're from Washington, D.C. where all four are members of the National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Mstislav Rostropovitch. In

fact the quartet had to leave their orchestra on a tour of the Far East in order to come to Banff for the competition. Manchester Quartet cellist Glen Garlick, a young lawyer turned musician, explains:

Glen Garlick: Actually the moment when we had to leave the orchestra was in Hong Kong and there was still three concerts left. And Rostropovitch, our music director, encourages us to seek opportunities to perform outside the orchestra, but at the same time he doesn't want to lose all of his best players for concerts and we had to approach him, and as soon as he heard about the competition, we told him what a high level it was going to be, he was very encouraging and instantly said, "But you must go". And he gave us every help he could to see us on our way, and of course he's been working with us, coaching us for a couple of years now.

Alexander: I was going to ask you about that, since you are the cellist of the quartet what it's like to be coached in chamber music by someone of that calibre?

Glen Garlick: Well as a cellist it's wonderful for me of course, but he really doesn't say that much to the cellist more than he would say to the other musicians. He's very good at broad general music ideas, he's wonderful at making picture stories for you to help you understand the piece and project some kind of idea.

Alexander: I take it the quartet came together because of the existence of the four of you in the orchestra.

Glen Garlick: Yes, and I thought about that often; I think we have an advantage there, and there's a disadvantage. The advantage for us is that having met in an orchestra we're all more or less settled, we're secure, or more secure financially than many young musicians.

Alexander: Does that mean there will come a point for you perhaps where you'll have to say, "Chamber Music is becoming more important to us", or will you say, "Well it is important, but it's going to continue to be a secondary activity or an activity which goes along with our orchestral positions?"

Glen Garlick: Actually that kind of decision has been put off by us until we know how we fare in competitions like this one, and we're happy to find so many other very fine quartets here. This is not your average mickey mouse competition; this is really topnotch and high quality all the way.

MUSIC (Rehearsal up and out)

Alexander: Well rehearsal time is over now, the moment of truth has arrived, the audience is waiting the jury is waiting with their pencils and their scores and their tape recorders, and Day Two of the Banff International String Quartet Competition is under way. Coming on stage at Margaret Greenham Theatre in the Banff Centre, the Manchester Quartet from Washington, D.C.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: From first-round competition at Banff that was the Manchester Quartet from Washington, D.C. playing the final movement of Antonin Dvorak's String Quartet in F Major, Opus 96 -- The "American" Quartet. The members of the Manchester Quartet: Hyun-Woo Kim and Holly Hamilton, violins, Lynn Edelson Levine, viola and Glenn Garlick, cello. All members of the National Symphony

Orchestra on leave from that Orchestra's Far Eastern tour to participate as one of ten young groups at the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

Alexander: Arts National is coming to you all this week direct from the Banff Centre, tracking our ten young quartets through this gruelling string quartet competition. Days One and Two devoted to meeting all the contestants and sampling their opening performances. On succeeding days we'll focus in on particular quartets as they move through the required Classical, Romantic and Modern repertoires plus the set piece for the competition, a newly commissioned work by Canadian composer Harry Somers which all ten quartets must play, having had about a month to learn it. Then on the weekend excitement will build as we enter the semi-final and final rounds of competition.

This event and the young quartets participating in it really indicates the shape of things to come in world chamber music. These young people are the Orford and Juilliard, the Aeolian and Budapest Quartets of tomorrow. And indeed it's members and former members of such illustrious ensembles who are judging and selecting their successors this week. We need only listen to discover how deserving these young quartets are of that honour. But apart from the musical promise the competition provides in such abundance, other trends are emerging too. For instance, all six jury members are men, and the long-established quartets from which they come are composed entirely of men as well. But among our forty young competitors twenty-one -- that's more than half -- are women. All but one of the ten quartets include at least one female member and two of them, the Lydian from Boston and the Colorado from New York are made up entirely of women. I talked with cellist Sharon Prater of the Colorado Quartet. They arrived at Banff fresh from winning the coveted Naumburg prize in New York, and I observed to Sharon that such a high level of sexual equality among the top rank of young string quartets would have been inconceivable even a decade ago.

Sharon Prater: Absolutely not. Things are changing radically in terms of the equality of the sexes in many professions, particularly in music, and people find that since men and women can, as you say, "Do the job," equally as well, with different temperaments, according to personality as individuals, it doesn't really matter what the mix or what the makeup of the quartet is, but it is unusual that all of a sudden at this competition you see an almost fifty-fifty split of male and female.

Alexander: You're all teaching at Juilliard right now?

Sharon Prater: Yes, we're actually teaching assistants to the Juilliard Quartet themselves. We coach their chamber music groups while they are away on tour.

Alexander: Winning the Naumburg, and possibly winning in Banff -- what sort of changes to the Colorado Quartet would this kind of competition win bring about?

Sharon Prater: Actually, they would be big changes because they would have to deal with launching a career. I have to say that we've had a major personnel change, half of the quartet actually changed last September, so we are a new quartet from what we were before and therefore we've had to kind of start over in certain ways in terms of establishing a career. But the Naumburg win of course has given us some opportunities to play at large cities in the United States, several Alice Tully Hall concerts, we get to commission a new quartet from an American composer, so all of that is good exposure you could say. And of course the prizes at Banff are very generous in terms of both money and public appearances and that will certainly do a lot to launch any of the young

quartets here who win one of the top prizes.

Alexander: And here now the Colorado Quartet, already winners of one major competition, embarking on the effort to win another at Banff.

(clapping)

Alexander: We'll hear this quartet of accomplished young women in a complete performance of a 20th-Century classic, the String Quartet No.2, Opus 36, by Benjamin Britten, composed in 1945 when Britten was at the height of his creative powers. Julie Rosenfeld, Deborah Redding, Francesca Martin and Sharon Prater -- originally from the University of Colorado, now in residence at the Juilliard in New York. They're the Colorado Quartet at the Banff competition with Benjamin Britten's Quartet No.2.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: String Quartet No.2, Opus 36, by Benjamin Britten, played in competition at the Banff Centre by the Colorado Quartet, four young women from the University of Colorado, now teaching assistants at the Juilliard School, recent Naumburg prize winners and among the early front runners at this Banff International String Quartet Competition. This is Day Two of the competition on Arts National. We have much more to come, but stand by next for a telephone recording from Quebec City on another major music competition currently in progress.

(clapping)

Alexander: Well it's quite a week for musical competitions in this country of Canada, quite a week for musical competitions on this network, CBC, CBC-Radio and CBC Stereo. Here in Banff we have the Banff International String Quartet Competition, meanwhile in Quebec City the CBC-Radio Talent Competition. "Arts National" covering Banff and our sister program, I use the word advisedly, "Mostly Music" covering the CBC-Radio Talent Competition in Quebec City, and Sheila Rogers is on the line with us from Quebec. (conversation with Alexander and Rogers re CBC Talent Competition).

Alexander: ... but right now back to our Banff International String Quartet Competition and our next participating ensemble. The Brodsky Quartet is from England. It takes its name from Russian violinist Adolf Brodsky who founded a quartet in Manchester in 1895. The most recently arrived member of the Brodsky Quartet is their violist, Paul Cassidy, with his unmistakable North Ireland brogue. How did he come to join the group?

Paul Cassidy: Well it was wonderful, really, and just a chance meeting. I'd heard of them of course, in Britain because they're well known, but they hadn't particularly known of me, they had sort of seen me around in different places. But about a year ago their normal viola player, their usual viola player, up until then, decided to leave. So they began to look for someone else and they asked one or two eminent musicians there who just happen to know me and luckily they gave them my name and I got a phone call about a year ago, less than a year ago, asking me if I'd like to go up and sort of play around and see if we got on, whatever. Which I did, and we got on very well, right away from the beginning, and I was the first person they tried so they were completely bowled over, as was I, and then we began working.

Alexander: I saw the Brodsky Quartet this afternoon in what's known euphemistically

as the "Reading Room", here at Banff, it's actually the bar, and there's a shuffleboard there and you seem very relaxed. Now this is a high-powered, international competition, the playing we've heard today has been of the highest calibre. You'd think that there would be a lot of tension, but people seem, you certainly seemed, relaxed, all of you.

Paul Cassidy: I don't think any quartet really likes competitions. I'm sure no one in the jury particularly likes being on the jury and having to decide, you know -- it's not the easiest position to be in. But when there is a competition that's so nice like this one, you know -- such a beautiful setting and a marvelous first prize -- quiet an amazing first prize, somehow you've got to get over the pressure and you've got to just cope as though it was just an everyday occurrence and as though you were just giving a concert and not playing to the panel who are going to decide whether you are any good or not. But our instruments are reacting quite strangely to the different climate (I'm making excuses now of course!). But they are indeed, they feel a bit strange, but we're getting acclimatized and today it was great because this is just a chance for everyone to get to hear everyone else and become a little more relaxed. And so tomorrow I guess the real competition begins, so there will be no excuses tomorrow.

Alexander: And no excuses right now either as England's Brodsky Quartet arrives on stage in Day Two of the Banff International String Quartet Competition. This competition is designed to present the best of the younger generation of chamber musicians. All the participants under 35, the average age much lower. The members of the Brodsky Quartet, for instance are all in their twenties. They've chosen to make their first appearance with the String Quartet in A Minor, Opus 13, by Felix Mendelssohn, written when he was barely twenty. Let's hear it now played by England's Brodsky Quartet.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: String Quartet in A Minor, Opus 13, composed by a young Felix Mendelssohn, played by a young foursome of performers, the Brodsky Quartet from England: Michael Thomas, Ian Belton, Paul Cassidy and Jacqueline Thomas.

(clapping)

Alexander: You're listening to the Banff International String Quartet Competition being broadcast direct from the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts on Arts National from CBC-Stereo. This is Day Two of the competition as we complete our initial encounter with each of the ten young quartets participating and hear the performances they gave on their first appearance before the jury.

(clapping)

Alexander: It's worth reminding ourselves again that the prestigious calibre of the competition jury itself is one of the many high profile aspects of this Banff Quartet Competition. The six-man jury consists of Andrew Dawes from Canada's Orford Quartet, Piero Farulli, Ede Banda, Emanuel Hurwitz, and that distinguished elder statesman, cellist Mischa Schneider. That jury will continue listening and taking notes and making preliminary judgments for several days yet as each quartet appears before them daily until just before the weekend when they begin making eliminations -- a difficult task to select from ten quartets all of whom are playing at a level belying their years. The field being winnowed down to the semi-finalists and then to the finalists. Arts National here to cover it all -- the tension, the heartbreak, but also the

camaraderie and the spirit of communal music making, plus of course, lots of music itself. For tonight we have two more quartets still to introduce. Up next the Harrington Quartet. They're the only all-male entry, they're all first desk players with the Amarillo, Texas, Symphony Orchestra. I asked first violinist John Sumerlin if that was how the quartet came together in the first place.

John Sumerlin: I think it could be spoken of as a requirement. Because our position when it was created was done so to serve the needs of the local university and the local symphony and to hopefully create a professional quartet.

Alexander: Did the university then create this quartet rather than the four of you coming together in some other way.

John Sumerlin: Indeed. The university was the recipient as was the symphony of a grant, which two grants were put together to make one position, and the existence of the quartet sort of hangs between the two major organizations and serves both of them as well as leaving enough time left over for the quartet, which of course we don't see it as time left over. They do sometimes.

Alexander: That is a rather unusual way for a quartet to come into being. Do you feel that the university made wise choices? Are the four of you finding that you are sympathetic ensemble?

John Sumerlin: Yes. They started first on violinists, and David Edge and I were the top two candidates of the violinists that applied, and then we joined the search for the other two members, so that when we interviewed violists and cellist finalists at one point we were able to read together in a group which might possibly become the new quartet. And certainly if David and I had the same procedure to go through again we would definitely choose the same people, even after two years playing together.

Alexander: The final question (for today anyway -- we've been tracking the quartets all week long): I'm interested in the motivations behind quartets who have applied and then of course been selected to be here. Is it the distinguished jury, the prize money, the chance to hear and meet other quartets? What was uppermost perhaps in motivating you to come?

John Sumerlin: I think the idea of really organizing our year for us. In other words with such a big goal for us to work toward we accomplished a lot that we might not have accomplished and we certainly wouldn't have necessarily forced ourselves to have so much music ready to play at one time for example.

Alexander: Let's hear the Harrington Quartet play now, the Final Movement marked Lento from Bela Barok's First World War String Quartet No. 2.

MUSIC

Alexander: That was the Lento Finale from Bela Barok's Second String Quartet played by the Harrington Quartet from Texas, one of ten contestants at this Banff International String Quartet Competition. Well the weather has cleared here at Banff, it's a brilliant spring day in the Rockies, but inside Margaret Greenham Theatre the psychological climate remains fraught with tension, as first-round quartet competition continues.

This week-long quartet competition is bringing together the very best young chamber musicians from around the world. The ten quartets here were chosen by a panel from twenty-one who submitted audition tapes. Of the final contestants

seven quartets come from the United States, and there is one each from England, Austria and Hungary. But really the international quality of the competition is broader than that statistic might suggest. Indeed it's very much in line with the tradition of Banff as a fifty-year arts training centre bringing students and teachers together from the four corners of the globe. As an example, take Wilma Smith, the first violinist of the Lydian Quartet. Wilma is a native of Fiji, she studied at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, before coming to New England where she met her three colleagues in this second of our two all-woman string quartets in the competition. The Lydian Quartet is now in residence at Brandeis University in Boston where their association with contemporary composers has undoubtedly influenced their particular interest in the 20th century quartet repertoire. I asked Wilma Smith how the Lydian Quartet had got its name and her answer turned into a mini-music history lesson going back to the ancient Greek musical modes.

Wilma Smith: Well, we had a very hard time to come up with a name. Finally, looking through a musical dictionary we found "Lydian", which is one of the old modes, and we discovered that among its characteristics was that it was a feminine mode, so we thought -- without being too blatant about it -- this was a subtle way of including in our name the fact that we are four women.

Alexander: Now there are two quartets here that are composed entirely of women and I think only one that is all male. To me that is the reverse of a situation that one would find ten or five years ago -- what's happened?

Wilma Smith: I think it's happening in a lot of professions and I notice it a lot in music. I think that there are a lot more women who are going to college that the balance was very much going towards women. So I think it's just an inevitable result of that.

Alexander: You are a University Quartet in Residence. That's a term one often hears. What does it mean -- for you?

Wilma Smith: Well for us it means that we teach, we teach privately our own instruments, and also coach chamber music groups, and we play a lot of concerts for the university, at Brandeis University in Boston, and we have a pretty strong composition department so we are involved with the graduate composers and faculty composers in performance of contemporary music, and just a regular concert series of our own there.

Alexander: Now in succeeding days -- and of course each quartet plays every day -- you are restricted at least in terms of repertoire period -- today is a kind of freestyle day, a first getting acquainted with the hall and the situation and so forth, and you've selected Bartok, as a matter of fact three quartets in a row who are appearing this afternoon have selected Bartok. What was behind the choice for you?

Wilma Smith: Well for us Bartok is something we've played I guess quite a bit and we feel comfortable with it, more comfortable than with some periods, so being, sort of, opening session we had to play something that we felt reasonably comfortable with and that's why we chose this piece.

Alexander: And here now is the Lydian Quartet, the last of the ten competing quartets who have come to the Banff Centre for this intensive week of performance and competition to play an excerpt from Bela Bartok's String Quartet No. 3, composed in 1927. We'll pick it up at the second section marked Allegro and hear it from there through to the end. By the way this quartet won Bartok, the Philadelphia Musical Fund Society prize in 1928. We'll have to wait to see later

in the week if it's equally lucky for the Lydians, but we can here them play it right now -

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: String Quartet No. 3, by Bela Bartok, played by the four female members of the Lydian Quartet from Brandeis University in Boston, Wilma Smith, Judith Eissenberg, Mary Ruth Ray and Rhonda Rider. They're the last of our ten competing quartets. You've met them all now in conversation and performance during Days One and Two at The Banff International String Quartet Competition being broadcast on location all this week and the coming weekend on Arts National.

(clapping)

Alexander: Tomorrow Day Three of the competition, the focus will narrow somewhat to the Classical Period. We've had the freestyle seven, tomorrow it's the Classics: Haydn, Mozart and early Beethoven as the six judges evaluate all ten quartets in this Viennese repertoire. Arts National will be back to cover that, including more quartet interviews, and a conversation with one of the judges, Andrew Dawes of Canada's Orford Quartet. That's Day Three, tomorrow. Then on Day Four it's the Romantics, Day Five the Moderns including the set piece for this competition, the new Movement for String Quartet by Canadian composer Harry Somers. As we move towards the weekend the semi-finalists and ultimately the finalists will be selected and heard. Until tomorrow evening, I'm Ian Alexander speaking to you from backstage at the Margaret Greenham Theatre at the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts saying Good Night for Arts National from the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

WEDNESDAY

April 27, 1983

Alexander: Good evening, welcome to Arts National. I'm Ian Alexander and once again this evening I'm speaking to you on location at Day Three of the Banff International String Quartet Competition being held at the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts here in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta. This is Classical Day, an opportunity to hear most of the ten young competing quartets as they display their abilities in the core quartet repertoire of Haydn, Mozart and early Beethoven -- that acid test for any string quartet aspiring to greatness. We'll bring you up to date on the progress of this exciting international class competition, we'll talk with members of two of the quartets who have already emerged as early front runners for a final position in the standings. And we'll meet one of the six-member jury panel. First though, let's hear one of the ten competing quartets. The Brodsky Quartet from England has been in existence for more than a decade, although all its members are still in their early twenties. From their classical round performance at the Banff Competition the Brodskys play for us now the Third Movement, Minuet, from Mozart's String Quartet in A Major K464.

MUSIC

Alexander: Minuet, from the String Quartet in A Major K464 by Mozart, played by England's young Brodsky Quartet in competition at Day Three at the Banff International String Quartet Competition. The members of the Brodsky Quartet: Ian Belton, second violin, and Paul Cassidy, viola, Michael Thomas, first violin and sister Jacqueline Thomas, cello. Many of the ten quartets who auditioned successfully to come to Banff to compete this week have some sort of family or personal connection to them like the two Thomases in the Brodsky Quartet. We

have brothers and sisters, husbands and wives and where no formal liaison exists, informal ones often spring up as you might expect among four young people who spent most of their time together. I guess you'd have to see the room allocation sheets here at Banff to know for sure, but I suspect also that there may even be some close ties between one quartet and another. At any rate certainly there's a strong atmosphere of friendship and camaraderie amongst the nineteen young men and the twenty-one young women, all of them under 35, who have made it to Banff for this String Quartet Competition. They listen to each other's performances, they eat together, they go for walks and fraternize in the lounge. And that kind of personal and professional companionship is, I'm sure, a welcome antidote to the natural tension and competitiveness of the situation. Mind you, staying with the subject of family style quartets for another moment, they can have their downside too. There's at least one ensemble here that's really not performing up to the level which had been expected of them, and we suspect that's at least in part because of some personal tensions which apparently have developed among its members. After all, this is a unique situation, it's a kind of pressure cooker which cannot help but emphasize both strengths and weaknesses. Here we have ten of the best young string quartets anywhere sequestered for a week away from their normal environments, all but cut off from the outside world here in the admittedly idyllic mountain setting of the Banff Centre. All their youthful energies are focused on a single goal and that is very simply to play to their idols from the older chamber music generation. There is an awful lot riding on the outcome, and yet no judging results are announced for the first full five days of the competition. Well, all of these factors are calculated to bring out the best in the performers, but on the other hand it's a pressure which can push some of them perilously close to the brink of cracking under the strain, not unlike their very instruments themselves, which I understand are also suffering under the unusual physical and climatic environment here at Banff. I asked one of the youngest participants in the competition, nineteen-year-old violist, Veronika Hagen, from Austria's Hagen Quartet, about all of this. What's it like to compete every day and not know how well you're doing? It must be a difficult strenuous experience.

Veronika Hagen: Yes, it's hard because the concentration has to last for so many days and the first round is not over yet, but otherwise it is good to concentrate on one piece every day.

Alexander: Now how do you do that? Do you set aside certain parts of the day for the quartet to get together and rehearse parts of the works you're going to play that day?

Veronika Hagen: Yes, we rehearse the piece we have to play that day, and others. We have to think that we have to play the next day again and so we must not get out of training for the other pieces.

Alexander: How much practising are you doing every day here at Banff?

Veronika Hagen: In the morning, two to three hours, after lunch we rest a little bit and then we practice until 9 or 10.

Alexander: Are you meeting some of the other quartets over a meal or ...

Veronika Hagen: Yes, we have much fun together and it's not like a competition between us.

Alexander: Really?

Veronika Hagen: It's really a good atmosphere. But we don't listen to them.

Alexander: Is that on purpose or just because you're so busy practicing? Or do you make a point of saying we won't listen?

Veronika Hagen: I absolutely don't want to listen to them.

Alexander: Why is that?

Veronika Hagen: When I hear them I can tell how they are and then I know where I am standing, but when I don't listen to them I play and I play, I want to play most beautiful I can and don't think of the others -- how the jury thinks of us and so.

Alexander: Violist Veronika Hagen, talking about how she and the other teenage members of the Hagen Quartet cope with the pressure of this Banff International String Quartet Competition. And we'll hear more from Veronika and the Hagens very shortly.

Not only the quartets themselves, but the jury, the organizers, the audience and even us from the Arts National team covering the competition are spending this week in a state of -- well, suspended animation. We're listening to six hours and more of wonderful string quartet playing every day. Of course we're savoring the pure musical experience. But also, naturally enough, we're making our own preliminary judgements. Now those judgements are subject to constant revision as we speculate about which of the ten quartets the jury will eliminate on Day Five, which will advance to the semi-final round, who the five ultimate winners will be and in which order they will be ranked -- all of this a matter of fine discriminations, a choice between good - better - best. As the competition proceeds we're trying each evening here on the program to present you with a cross-section of that day's activities. But even as we select the best music we've heard to broadcast I suppose we're also in the process implicitly telling you which quartets we feel are performing at the highest level, which are the ones that could go all the way. So let me go far out on a limb with some extremely tentative and absolutely subjective mid-week impressions. First of all, judging by audience reaction alone if nothing else, I'd say there are two quartets who are clear favorites at this stage, they are the Hagen Quartet from Austria, they are the youngest group here, and the Colorado Quartet from New York City, who arrived at Banff just on the crest of having won the Naumburg prize. And we'll hear complete performances by both these ensembles again tonight to help you judge for yourself. But hot on the heels of the Hagens and the Colorados are at least three other quartets who show every sign of also having a good shot at the final. They're the Lydian, the Mendelssohn, and the Vermilion Quartets, all from the United States. Now that I've said that, let me add at once that most of the rest of the field has also turned in one or more competition - class performances. That includes England's Brodskys, Hungary's Eders, and America's Di Vincis. At most, I'd say that there are just one or two groups who appear to have fallen behind at this stage. Anyway, the point is that, as in any competition, things can change dramatically from one day to the next. Already some quartets who turned in disappointing first performances have returned to stun the audience, really knock us out. And the reverse process has happened too; some who looked very good at the start have been fading a bit in the stretch -- to borrow another metaphor from sports. All of this one reason why it's undoubtedly a wise decision on the part of the competition organizers to let each quartet play five times before the jury has to announce any eliminations at all.

So here, on Day Three of the Banff International String Quartet Competition, there are still ten quartets, they're all very much in the running, and we'll hear several of them tonight on Arts National's continuing on-location Banff Competition coverage, beginning next, as I promised you, with more conversation and some music from the teenage Hagen Quartet from Salzburg, Austria. With its

membership of two young men and two young women, two brothers and a sister and a close friend from school, the Hagen foursome really epitomizes many of the trends we're discovering here at Banff among the younger generation of string quartets. There's equality of representation between men and women, there's close family ties. As well, of course, in the case of the Hagens, there is consummate chamber music making in the grand tradition of the European style. I asked violist Veronika Hagen about how they grew up in that tradition at home and at the Salzburg Mozarteum where they all study. Her answer took us back once more to that notion of the family quartet. The family that plays together it seems sometimes, but not always, stays together. In the case of the young Hagens it began with their father. His instrument is the same as his daughter Veronika's, he's principal violist in the Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra.

Veronika Hagen: We have to thank everything to our father, to be grateful to him. We started to play, as I told you yesterday, when we were very small, six years, and Clemens was five, and as soon as possible we played together. We played Christmas carols and went to the hospital at Christmas time and played for the ill people and I always think about it because it was such a wonderful adventure to play for them and to see how music makes them glad and helps them. That's the reason I make music. Everything I can, I have to thank my father.

Alexander: We are very interested at this competition in hearing quartets from Europe and from North America and we hear a considerable difference. I don't quite know how to pin it down, but there is a difference. If I could put it in a few words it seems to me that the European quartets are much more like one big instrument played by eight hands, if you know what I mean, as opposed to four individuals. Is it your sense that as you're being taught at home and at the Mozarteum that a great deal of emphasis is being put on a tradition of close ensemble?

Veronika Hagen: Yes, it must be one sound. It shouldn't be that here are four soloists and just play together music. These four should be unified. I realize the difference between American and European quartets. I think Europeans -- especially we from Austria -- we don't play so loud, perhaps because the halls in Europe are not so large as here in America. But I think it "chamber" music and it's originally from "room", where you had to play, and the music was written for such a room. I don't know what is better.

Alexander: I think that makes sense too. Do you think then it means that people like yourself, at your young age, have to make a decision and say it's either going to be solo or orchestra career or chamber music? And if it's chamber music you have to pursue that path and forget about the other ones?

Veronika Hagen: Oh yes, of course, we have a standard in our quartet but we also have to train ourselves as soloists because when you are a better soloist you have better technique and the quartet playing will be not so hard, and you can concentrate on the music and on being unified.

Alexander: Do you want to make your career with this quartet? Do you want this quartet to go on and on?

Veronika Hagen: I only can hope, because I can't direct it.

Alexander: But you're going to work at it.

Veronika Hagen: I want to. Yes.

Alexander: Veronika Hagen, thank you very much.

Veronika Hagen: Thank you, too.

Alexander: Now lets hear the Hagen Quartet demonstrate how completely they've imbibed that European string quartet tradition at the tender average age of nineteen. Here are Lucas, Veronika, and Clemens Hagen with Annette Bik, the young Hagen Quartet from Austria, to play one of Franz Joseph Haydn's Erodogy Quartets; it's the Opus 64, No. 5, in the key of D Major.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: String Quartet in D Major, Opus 64, No. 5 by Franz Joseph Haydn played by the Hagen Quartet from Austria, two brothers a sister and their friend, average age nineteen. Apart from the classical refinement of their musicianship, the Hagens, who are the youngest quartet in this competition, are clearly popular favorites at Banff already. The crowd is always much larger when they play. This is not a new experience for them; they won the audience prize at last year's Portsmouth Competition in England, as well as the jury grand prize.

(clapping)

Alexander: You're listening to on-location coverage of the Banff International String Quartet Competition on Arts National on CBC-Stereo. This is Day Three, Classical Day, the first of three rounds in which each of the ten quartets must play works from one musical period as the jury evaluates their approach to the Classical, Romantic and Modern repertoires in turn.

I mentioned earlier that there are two young quartets who at this stage of the competition appear to be turning in the most consistently top-notch performances: the Hagen Quartet, whom we've just heard, and the Colorado Quartet whom we'll hear next. This latter group takes its name from its origins as graduate quartet-in-residence at the University of Colorado. Now, though, the four young women who comprise the Colorado Quartet have moved to New York City, where they serve as teaching assistants to the renowned Juilliard Quartet. That position in itself is both an indication of their formidable talents and an ideal way to further hone and refine their abilities. Further confirmation of the Colorado Quartet's status as one of the most accomplished and promising young string quartets on the international scene came just a day or two before this Banff competition began, when it was announced that the Colorado Quartet had won this year's Naumburg Prize, one of the most coveted honours in the world of chamber music. It carries with it material rewards of course, a major set of concert engagements, and the opportunity to commission a new quartet from a contemporary composer. When I spoke with Julie Rosenfeld and Sharon Prater first violin and cello, respectively, of the Colorado Quartet, we talked about the impact of the Naumburg win and how it might have affected their attitude to this present competition at Banff. But I started by asking them about the Banff experience itself. How are things going at this mid-week point? Do the rigours of daily competition get any easier as the days go by? Colorado Quartet cellist, Sharon Prater,

Sharon Prater: I find that actually the tension increases as the week goes on. We actually thought, as a quartet, that it would be the opposite, that there could be nothing worse than the first day. Right? Wrong! Of course the classical works falling on the second day, everyone is always kind of on pins and needles when they feel they're being judged about classical -- you know, early Beethoven or Haydn or Mozart -- because there's such a tradition, an excellent standard that has been set already in the quartet world.

Alexander: Julie, how about you in that regard?

Julie Rosenfeld: Well I agree with Sharon on the most part, although for me it depends piece to piece. For me the Beethoven was a severe trial just because of all the stuff that I have to do in that piece, whereas Britten was a little bit easier for me, but I think on the whole I agree with her. The tension as it gets towards the semi-finals and the finals becomes more acute.

Alexander: Yes. I'm thinking, too, with this core repertoire -- Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven -- surely you can't help but think about the judges who are sitting up there who are such masters in that repertoire. Do their names and their performances ever flash across your mind?

Sharon Prater: Oh, constantly, absolutely I would say. Each judge is known for a different style, of their own playing and of their present or former quartet's playing, and things that they have specialized in, and certain -- I wouldn't say opinions -- but certain styles that the public knows they hold dear, so ...

Alexander: ...preferences, preconceptions almost.

Sharon Prater: ...absolutely. So it's not a desirable thing to consider, but I think that it creeps into everyone's mind.

Alexander: Now Julie, you were shaking your head a little bit at that ...

Julie Rosenfeld: Well, again I agree somewhat and disagree in another way because I think we're always trying to push out those feelings of being judged. I think that's the most traumatic thing, to be in a performance and to feel that you are being judged, not that somebody's enjoying what you're doing but they're judging what you're doing! That is just traumatic. So I feel that pressure, not specifically from one judge more than the other, that's just a general thing that you just kind of push out of your mind. Sometimes you're more successful than others.

Alexander: Some quartets are spending quite a bit of time in the green room where there's stereo feed and a video monitor, or in the audience listening to other quartets. Some are staying right away -- staying in their practice rooms or going for walks or whatever. How is it with the Colorado Quartet? Julie:

Julie Rosenfeld: Well generally we're staying away. We're rehearsing and being by ourselves and gathering our thoughts and every once in a while we'll take a peek, perhaps at the group that comes right after or something like that, but generally I think we are trying to keep our sanity by staying away.

Alexander: Couldn't though that be considered to be one of the positive attractions of a competition, that it attracts a lot of great quartets, that it's an opportunity to hear colleagues play.

Sharon Prater: Absolutely. I would just interject one thing: the Colorado Quartet actually knows many of the other quartets that are playing here because we've been to other competitions or we've heard them. Actually, many of the other international quartets we know and were we not familiar with so many of the other quartets we would be spending more time in the audience, because I know one of the joys of one of the previous competitions we did was hearing for the first time the young Hagen Quartet. That was last year at the Portsmouth competition. We were just very, very, impressed and delighted at having had the opportunity just to hear them play. So it is a very attractive and a very valuable thing if you're not familiar with your colleagues' playing, to try to balance hearing them as well as keeping your own schedule and as Julie says, your own sanity.

Alexander: Let me ask you something that may get your backs up. First of all let's talk about the Naumburg prize. Is that a competition in fact?

Sharon Prater: Yes it is. It's not just for string quartets though, it's a chamber music competition. So this year there were piano trios, string quartets, mixed ensembles and I believe a woodwind quintet.

Alexander: Does winning that take a little bit (this is the more edgy question I was going to get to), does having won a Naumburg so recently take a little bit of the edge off the importance of Banff to you?

Julie Rosenfeld: Not for me because -- let me give you an example: I went to a violin competition last September and I was an unknown, I wasn't one of the big names that were there. I had made it into the semi-finals and I was so happy -- it pleased me so much that I had gotten that far against very strong competition. And it occurred to me recently that I'm feeling much more nervous about this competition than I was about that one, and my friend Sharon here pointed out why.

Alexander: Why is that Sharon?

Sharon Prater: That's because, at least in my opinion, once you have been "judged" to be of a certain standard, in a way you have much more at stake if you seemingly "fail" to meet that standard, and at least for me I feel like -- well it makes the idea of being judged -- you know every note being judged, much more acute.

Alexander: And after the Naumburg you now have, in a sense, further to fall.

Sharon Prater & Julie Rosenfeld: Exactly.

Sharon Prater: So it's a no-win situation.

Alexander: Final question: At this point in the middle of this whole process, do you have a sense at this stage of how you're doing?

Sharon Prater: Absolutely not.

Julie Rosenfeld: It's so, so subjective. You know, we got there and we say God how did we do? And it's such a subjective thing to be playing your heart out on that stage for half an hour to forty-five minutes, every day.

Alexander: Are you playing up to your own standard, or are you even surpassing it because the pressure's on? Are you playing as well as you want to?

Sharon Prater: Sometimes yes, sometimes no. It's a very difficult question.

Alexander: I know. Anything to add?

Sharon Prater: (Long pause) Actually no. I think I'll let that stand. (laughing)

Alexander: O.K. We'll wait for the weekend. In the meantime thank you both.

Julie Rosenfeld & Sharon Prater: Thank you.

(clapping)

Alexander: The classical division of the Banff Competition repertoire goes as far as Beethoven's early Opus 18, Lobkowitz Quartets of 1801 and the four young women of the Colorado Quartet make their Day Three competition appearance with one of these works: The String Quartet in A Major, Opus 18, No. 5 by Beethoven. The Colorado Quartet:

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: String Quartet in A Major, Opus 18, No. 5 by Beethoven. One of his set of six dedicated to Prince Lobkowitz at the very beginning of the 19th century. It was played by the Colorado Quartet from the Juilliard School of Music in New York. They're one of two all-female entries at this Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

Alexander: And perhaps the last hour or so, now that we've played you complete performances by the Hagen Quartet and the Colorado Quartet, has indicated why we're praising these two quartets in particular so highly, while not neglecting most of the other eight quartets at this competition; the standard is very high, in our opinion -- and perhaps now in yours -- the Hagens and the Coloradans particularly outstanding. Well there's no question that this week-long competition is a tremendously demanding experience for the ten participating quartets who must play a different work every day, but there is another group of people who have an equally difficult job. They must listen with maximum attention to all ten of those daily performances adding up to more than six hours of chamber music. It might sound like a nice way to spend your time, but they must also take detailed notes and assign numerical marks to performance as they prepare to select the semi-finalists and rank them in order of merit. Of course I'm speaking of the six-member panel of jurors at the Banff International String Quartet Competition whose names read like a roster of the most distinguished senior chamber musicians in the world; Raphael Hillyer, Ede Banda, Piero Farulli, Emanuel Hurwitz, Mischa Schneider and Andrew Dawes. Of course the jury is strictly isolated from contact with the contestants. In fact they're doing very little talking to anyone here around the Banff Centre. They're wrestling in private with their preliminary decisions, making extensive notes after each performance, sometimes going to listen to playback tapes for a second impression. However one judge kindly took time out of his busy schedule for a very revealing and frank mid-week conversation about the whole process. He's Andrew Dawes, known across this country and abroad as the first violinist of Canada's flagship Orford Quartet, formed in the mid-sixties at Mt. Orford, Quebec. Before that, though, Andrew Dawes himself had studied at the Banff Centre and he's since returned here to teach. I asked him if he'd ever been part of this kind of international competition jury before.

Andrew Dawes: No, this is my very first international. I had competed, but any judging I've done was at the Quebec Conservatory or the University, that sort of thing.

Alexander: I get the sense that, among other things, for the jury it's an endurance test; you have six plus hours of music to listen to a day.

Andrew Dawes: Yes, actually somebody else mentioned that. As a matter of fact I don't mind it at all. I was wondering why that is, and I think it's simply because in the normal course of my day I'm spending a lot of time listening, either to myself or the others, and I do a lot of teaching at the University of Toronto, so it's actually not tiring at all. Certainly it beats being a contestant!

Alexander: Of course I have to be pretty circumspect about the questions I ask you. Because you probably haven't made your final decisions yet, and we certainly don't want to prejudice that at all. But what is your over-all sense of the general standard of playing from all ten quartets so far?

Andrew Dawes: Well, of course there is a variety of levels of playing, but generally the level is very high.

Alexander: Higher than you anticipated, possibly?

Andrew Dawes: Actually, I didn't anticipate anything. I didn't really know what was going to happen. But it is very good playing, and certainly some of the quartets - really it's almost an international calibre of playing, so that certainly the top people who are going to be winning here are really very, very good players.

Alexander: Are you listening for what is there now, for the actuality of the performances, or are you also thinking about - well some of these kids are pretty young - are you thinking about what you see as potential? Are you tasting the wine before it's fully aged?

Andrew Dawes: Yes, in fact that is so. I think you do tend to judge, or at least I do, bearing that in mind. There's one very young group, for example, and one that has been together for 10 years, I understand. I don't know; maybe some of the other groups have been together as long. That's all I know about them.

Alexander: Do you intend to take these things into consideration?

Andrew Dawes: Yes, in fact. I can't get really specific, but certainly that is a question.

Alexander: I'm interested, and I'm sure our audience would be interested, in a little bit of the actual judging procedure. I understand that in the 6-person jury there is no Chairman.

Andrew Dawes: That is correct. Well, Ken Murphy is sort of running things.

Alexander: Is the jury getting together after each session at all?

Andrew Dawes: So far we haven't. We've been talking together, and for some reason we all thought we weren't supposed to be talking to each other about the competitors but in fact we have, and so far it has been very amicable and I'm sure it will stay that way. We're going to get together on Thursday at some point and decide who is going to go on. You see up to now the contestants have been playing the pieces they wanted to play, and then from Friday we have to choose what we would like to hear, and on Saturday we have to have whittled the whole thing down to 5 groups. And so I suppose on Thursday there may be some discussion about who is going to be included - maybe a lot of discussion, I don't know.

Alexander: When you come on Thursday night, let's say, to deciding on the semi-finalists you're looking back on about five performances by each of the quartets. Is it difficult to keep that whole week in balance?

Andrew Dawes: Well, what I have been doing is that every time a quartet plays I have to assign a mark. I go back and just leaf through all the critiques I've made so far and the marks, and try to make the very first quartet that played establish the base mark for me. I've tried more or less to work from there-

some higher, some lower - and to keep it more or less consistent. I think it's difficult to remember things, and for that reason I have made a lot of notes. I realize it's going to be just a blur at some point. I have enough references as to what went on - what I felt was good and what not as good. I can pretty well recall what happened, and then we have the tapes.

Alexander: Let's move away a little bit from the specific challenge that faces you as a judge to some general aspects of what we have been hearing so far this week. Something that has been of interest to us is that while there are seven quartets from North America and three from Europe (if you include Britain), we are getting the sense that perhaps we are hearing a North American and a contrasting European sound. Is that something you would ...?

Andrew Dawes: I don't know. I know a lot of people feel that, and I don't know why, but I have never been able to appreciate that; and also I think there's such a cross-over. I mean the Orford Quartet members in large part studied in Europe, while Denis did most of his studying in the States. But a lot of Europeans come over to America to go to Juilliard - a lot of kids from North Korea and Japan. So there's such an intermingling of teaching and influences that I'm not sure that there is such a difference: that is to say, I'm not convinced that you could - at least I certainly couldn't - listen to tapes of quartets, blind listening so to speak, and say, "Oh sure, that's an American quartet", or "That's obviously a European quartet". I'm not really sure, but there's a certain quality, a kind of strength of playing, bold playing that you might characterize as being American, but it's a pretty big generality, I think.

Alexander: Do you think that there are some approaches to quartet performance that may be very impressive once, if you are talking a concert, that may not go the distance over a week, and other kinds of styles that tend to grow on you and, as I say, go the distance?

Andrew Dawes: Yes, that's very true actually, and I think that's the nice part about being able to hear, for example, a Classical work, a Romantic work, and a Modern work as well, because there is no question that a group or a player, if he's got a very strong personality but is somehow limited by that personality, or the quartet group itself are limited, then they are going to do some things very well, but other things just can't be played in that manner, and therefore they are not going to be played so well, so there will be a disparity in the mark, in the kind of appreciation you have of it, whereas I think the really good groups are going to play everything very well. There is going to be just a sense of rightness about the Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven or whatever they are doing.

Alexander: Do you feel that it is important that a quartet that is going to make it to the finals do well in all those repertoires? I mean if you were assigning numbers throughout you would have a situation where a quartet is so wonderful in the Classical period that that may move their cumulative mark up?

Andrew Dawes: Well, that's funny, because just out of curiosity I was averaging up the marks that I have given so far, to see if it was tallying the way I thought things were progressing, and in fact they were very close.

Alexander: That doesn't always happen. The subjective and the objective are sometimes far apart, aren't they?

Andrew Dawes: Yes. Well, it's a situation where I don't know how the judging is going to turn out, so I'm thinking as clearly as I can about what I appreciate about things and what I don't why I like them and why I don't like them, and very specifically why I'm giving the mark I'm giving. In the eliminations at the

beginning, three people - Tom Rolston, Lorand Fenyves, and Zoltan Szekely - came out evidently exactly in accordance with one another, and it's very possible that it may happen on Thursday. But if it doesn't, then I think it probably will be necessary to be very clear.

Alexander: To make your case?

Andrew Dawes: Yes. If I felt that this one was good and maybe that group should be placed a little higher than the others.

Alexander: Part way to that initial decision and about half way to the final decision, do you have a clear sense of who the front runners are for you?

Andrew Dawes: Yes.

Alexander: You do. So you know where you see one, two and three?

Andrew Dawes: Pretty well.

Alexander: So do we, and maybe we should stop the conversation right there, before either Andy or I commit an indiscretion. We've been talking with Andrew Dawes, first violinist of the Orford Quartet and one of six members of the jury at the Banff International String Quartet Competition which is being covered all week long as it happens by Arts National on CBC-Stereo.

This is Day Three of the competition, Classical Day, when each of the ten participating quartets plays one of the two pieces they've preselected from this repertoire of Haydn, Mozart and early Beethoven. With such a large amount of material to choose from (after all Haydn himself wrote about seventy odd quartets), it's been a bit surprising to find so many of our competing young quartets choosing to perform the same few works. For example, so far we've already had no less than three performances of Mozart's D Major Quartet K575 and three other contestants have chosen the same Haydn work, the String Quartet in D Major, Opus 76, No. 5. I guess, though, in one way that works to our benefit and to yours in the listening audience because we can hear a complete performance of this Haydn Quartet and yet at the same time let you hear three competing ensembles through the simple expedient of creating a composite performance with the assistance of some recording tape.

So here are three quartets to play one quartet, the String Quartet in D Major, Opus 76, No. 5, by Franz Joseph Haydn. To begin this composite performance we have the Lydian Quartet, our other all-distaff ensemble in this competition, four young women, three from New England and one from Fiji, now together in their third year as quartet-in-residence at Brandeis University, Boston, and still very much in the running here at Banff. Here they are to open this Haydn round-robin.

MUSIC

Alexander: The Lydian Quartet from Brandeis University with the opening Allegretto of Haydn's Opus 76, No. 5. Now to perform the second movement, a beautiful slow Largo Cantabile, we have the Eder Quartet formed at the Franz Liszt Academy in Hungary, including brothers Pal and Gyorgy Eder and Pal's wife Erika Toth. From Boston-Haydn to Budapest-Haydn.

MUSIC

Alexander: That was the second movement, marked Largo Cantabile, from Haydn's String Quartet in D Major, Opus 76, No. 5. It was played by the Eder Quartet from Hungary. Yet a third competing ensemble chose the same work as their classical day entry at Banff. The Manchester Quartet is composed of four members of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington D.C. And they play now the third movement, Minuetto, as this Haydn composite quartet performance continues.

MUSIC

Alexander: The Minuetto from Haydn's D Major Quartet, Opus 76, No. 5, performed by the Manchester Quartet from Washington D.C. at the Banff International String Quartet Competition. To conclude this unusual treatment of a Haydn Quartet let's come full circle back to the same group who began it all, Boston's Lydian Quartet, whose four young ladies tackle now the Presto Finale.

MUSIC

Alexander: We've just heard a complete performance of the String Quartet in D Major, Opus 76, No. 5, by Franz Joseph Haydn -- a unique composite performance from the Banff International String Quartet Competition featuring all three of the young quartets who've played it for the jury on a single day, Classical Day, Day Three of this week-long competition. The first and last movement played by the Lydian Quartet, the two middle movements by the Eder and the Manchester Quartets respectively.

(clapping)

Alexander: I mentioned earlier in connection with the up-and-down unpredictable roller coaster course of any major musical competition like this one, that predictions are a very dangerous business because performers who may start slow can often improve dramatically from one day to the next for any number of reasons while others who sound impressive at first may have trouble going the distance. It's my sense that that ongoing improvement has been true of the Lydian Quartet, whom we've already heard (remember these are my subjective impressions only), and I think that same gradual improvement has been the case with the Di Vinci Quartet. They certainly surprised us all with their Classical Day performance of yet another Haydn Quartet, also yet another D Major quartet, as it turns out, the Opus 20, No. 4. From that performance we have time to hear the final two movements. Successors to the Colorado Quartet at the University of Colorado, this is the Di Vinci Quartet:

MUSIC

Alexander: That's our last music from Day Three, Classical Day at this Banff International String Quartet Competition. The American Di Vinci Quartet with the closing movements of Franz Joseph Haydn's String Quartet in D Major, Opus 20, No. 4. The Di Vinci Quartet, still a group to keep an eye on as this Banff competition moves towards its climax.

(clapping)

Alexander: Well, we've heard a great deal of outstanding chamber music on Arts National tonight. Classical quartet music by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven played by contestants here at the Banff International String Quartet Competition. And in the process I hope we've given you a sense of the colour and the excitement of this competition as it progresses from day to day towards the first eliminations, the semi-final and final rounds. Ultimately five quartets will win prizes,

be ranked in order; they'll be heard in concert on the weekend on special editions of Arts National this Saturday and Sunday. Remember, though, as yet and for a couple of days still, all ten quartets remain in the running as the judges continue to listen and evaluate. However, I think we've shown you just how high the overall standard of performance is, and perhaps we've been able to suggest as well, in a tentative way, the front runners, or some of them at least, at this point. You'd certainly have to go a long way to beat those stellar Haydn and Beethoven performances by the Hagen and Colorado Quartets, both those ensembles of course already veteran competition winners. But also the Lydians and the Brodskys and the Da Vincis worth watching, as well as two groups we didn't have time to hear today, the Mendelssohn and Vermilion Quartets. We'll feature them in future broadcasts direct from Banff. Tomorrow, Day Four is Romantic Day, and then Day Five is Modern Day. That will include the set competition piece, Harry Somers' brand new commissioned Movement for String Quartet. So until tomorrow at the same time, I'm Ian Alexander, speaking for the entire Arts National on location team, saying Good Night from the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

THURSDAY

April 28, 1983

Alexander: Good Evening, and welcome to Arts National. I'm Ian Alexander on location at Day Four of the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

MUSIC

Alexander: Once again this evening we're backstage at the Margaret Greenham Theatre here at the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts, eavesdropping on one of ten young string quartets who are competing daily all this week.

MUSIC

Alexander: This is the all-female Colorado Quartet from the Juilliard School in New York City. They're one of the front runners of this competition, but that doesn't do anything to relax their last-minute nerves as they wait in the green room to step once more before the judges. Indeed, if anything it makes the tension and the pressure more acute. Today is Romantic Day at the Banff Competition and in a moment we'll hear the Coloradans play part of a string quartet by Antonin Dvorak.

As Arts National's continuing coverage of the Banff International String Quartet Competition moves to within a day of the first eliminations we'll hear again tonight from five of the young groups who are most likely to finish in the money. The Colorado and the Lydian, both all women, the teenaged Hagens from Austria, the brash Mendelssohns from New York, and England's Brodsky Quartet.

MUSIC (talking within the practising Colorado Quartet)

Alexander: And now the stage manager has called the Colorado Quartet on stage to take their places before the audience and the jury. They've been here several times already this week. They've already won New York's Naumburg prize but there's still a long way to go before this Banff competition is over. The second movement, Molto Vivace, from Dvorak's String Quartet in A Flat Major, Opus 135, played now by the Colorado Quartet.

MUSIC

Alexander: That was the second movement, marked *Molto Vivace*, from the String Quartet in A Flat Major, Opus 135, played by the four young women of the Colorado Quartet. As we've said before this week on Arts National, there are a couple of quartets, including the Colorado, who seem virtually assured of a high final position but, behind them there is a whole group of others who still have a good shot at the finals as well, and here it comes down ultimately to how consistently they perform from now on, and of course to the subjective preferences of the six-member jury panel. At stake, \$30,000 in cash prizes, a matched set of bows, an extensive North American concert tour, and the prestige which will accrue to the winners -- all of invaluable assistance to a young string quartet seeking to establish international reputation. No wonder the competitors continue to rehearse almost around the clock, and we have a rare treat right now -- a chance to eavesdrop on one of those rehearsals and analyse it after the fact with two of the performers, second violinist Nicholas Mann and cellist Marcy Rosen from New York's Mendelssohn Quartet. This group epitomizes the extroverted American chamber music style, and they're almost certain to survive the semi-final eliminations tomorrow. What's it like working out the relationships between four highly-strung young artists under the strain of competition rehearsal.

Nicholas Mann: Well the chemistry is unquestionably very difficult to work out. It's always compared to a marriage with four people instead of two, and because we live most of our life playing music it's not only within the music but also personally we have to get along.

Alexander: Marcy, is it a matter of someone being in charge or is it like a democracy?

Marcy Rosen: Well it's a matter of bringing that democracy to life and trying to have four equal voices in terms of input and just shaping the work.

Alexander: But four equal voices could become a cacophony couldn't it?

Marcy Rosen: Yes, and it often does.

Alexander: Let's listen to a bit of this rehearsal and then talk some more.

MUSIC (Mendelssohn Quartet Rehearsal)

Alexander: Marcy, I think that was you saying, "Which notes are we not supposed to play quite so loud?"

Marcy Rosen: That was Laurie. I was the one that said she was talking about the last two chords.

Alexander: O.K. Laurie is the first violinist, who you might think was the leader. She's asking what should be done, and I think all other three part members of the quartet say something in response.

Marcy Rosen: That's right.

Alexander: And do they say the same thing or contradictory things?

Nicholas Mann: One of the most difficult things is the communication. And many times three people will be trying to say the same thing but will not be able to make the other members understand what they want, so there is a lot of extraneous arguments that in the end you find was unnecessary. There maybe should be a frame of reference that in the rehearsal sessions that we're hearing that's not a normal rehearsal.

Alexander: In what way?

Nicholas Mann: In that this is the night before we have to play under a lot of pressure.

Alexander: So everybody's a bit on edge.

Nicholas Mann: Everyone's on edge and that affects how one rehearses. Probably everyone is a little testier, but at the same time when you find someone is on edge you tend to back off quicker than you would under a normal circumstance.

Alexander: Would it come down eventually to -- if it's a matter of making a musical refinement or getting someone pissed off -- that you might make the compromise musically and say the whole shape of the piece and the mood of the quartet is more important than this moment? Does that ever happen?

Nicholas Mann: Well I think definitely we are not as pushy for our own desires under such a situation. A rehearsal like that is more just refining certain points that we all feel are a little uneasy. Probably they are areas that we've rehearsed before and we're just making sure that we want to do the same thing.

Alexander: Let's listen to another little bit.

MUSIC (Mendelssohn Quartet Rehearsal)

Alexander: O.K. I was hearing those chords change there. Why is this such a difficult moment? Why are you working so hard on this moment? Marcy:

Marcy Rosen: It's the final chords of the piece, and a great deal of the excitement that is carried off or not carried off relies on how we play those last four chords.

Alexander: Now you're working on stuff that is by no means scored, is that right? This is your performance practice input.

Marcy Rosen: Right. This is our interpretation of what the composer wrote.

Alexander: O.K. Now there's a lot of talk here, Nick, about big breaths and by the last time we hear the chords in that sequence there is a noticeable pause at one moment. Is that what you're working towards there?

Nicholas Mann: Well, you know there are maybe a dozen ways to play those last chords and almost all of them would probably be good, and as one experiences a piece over one's life, one would want to change too. And right here I think it was probably me that had the idea to do something different, or that I thought was more effective.

Alexander: That pregnant moment -- that split second pregnant pause.

Nicholas Mann: That moment right before the last two chords I thought added an extra comph.

Alexander: I think we're still working on these chords.

Nicholas Mann: That's true, we still are.

(rehearsal discussion)

Alexander: Correct me if I'm wrong. Now that Nick has worked on this pregnant pause you have to back up further to set the scene for it, is that what's happening here?

Marcy Rosen: Well what we're working on is pacing, in other words in order to pace something you have to start from one point and end up in another and hopefully figure out how you're going to get to them.

Alexander: So that's where the accelerando that you talk about comes in there?

Marcy Rosen: Well it moves. I mean in that particular case I think we finally decided the final moment of the piece doesn't come until the last two chords so the real finality comes in there.

Alexander: I was going to ask this too, are you making little pencil notations in the score as these things happen too?

Marcy Rosen: No, because we change them. There are many things that we change for each concert -- hopefully we don't do it the same way, hopefully from one minute before on the tape to the next minute the idea, the general idea might be the same but its execution will be slightly different. So you can't -- no we don't ...

Nicholas Mann: We're probably discussing more minute things than what would be written down for reminder for the next time.

Alexander: I'm surprised, given the situation as you were describing it. You've just arrived in Banff, tomorrow you have to play for the first time before the jury. I would think that you would be wanting to play it the way you know that you play it, not making changes now, not making adjustments now.

Nicholas Mann: That's only if you think that the way you're playing it is successful, see, and you go through phases and at that moment I wasn't thinking it was successful.

Alexander: When we watch quartets play, as we are all this week, I find it fascinating to see what the radio audience doesn't see -- the visual contact and subtle things between the members of the quartet, that are I guess cue-in devices. I think you discuss that in this next sequence.

MUSIC (rehearsal discussion)

Alexander: How's a nebulous down beat different from a non-nebulous down beat?

Nicholas Mann: A nebulous one is something the other person can't follow.

Alexander: It may or may not be there in fact. Now someone's talking about the need eyecontact. Who is that?

Marcy Rosen & Nicholas Mann: Ira.

Alexander: O.K. That's your violist. And he wants to be cued from Laurie, the first violinist, at that point? Why?

Nicholas Mann: They're married and they still can't play together. (laughing)

Alexander: I didn't know that.

Marcy Rosen: We don't advertise that so much although it just went over the radio

Alexander: Almost every quartet seems to have some kind of either sibling or marital relation to ...

Marcy Rosen: Isn't that amazing.

Nicholas Mann: It saves money on hotel bills. (laughing)

Alexander: Yes, I really want to see the room allocation charts here to get the real inside story. Why would eye contact be important at that moment?

Marcy Rosen: Because it's a very hard ensemble place. It's the end of a phrase and also the beginning of another phrase, and so Laurie has to do two things at once. And Ira's finishing something and he wants to be with her, and if there's total obliviousness to the other person then it's really not possible to be together and to feel it, so there's kind of a -- you have to emote a little bit outwardly and it's just a vibe that goes through and hopefully reaches you.

Nicholas Mann: Everyone has their own inner pulse and it doesn't always sink, no matter how many times you rehearse, especially under tension. You know, everyone's heart beats at a different speed so the eye contact will help sort of re-align everyone's meter.

Alexander: How do you know whether it's an eye contact that is supposed to mean something or whether they just happen to be looking at you?

Nicholas Mann: If you rehearsed eight hours a day for how many years, you'd start to learn what everyone ...

Marcy Rosen: If you look at somebody that you know very well you can tell a lot by the way they're looking at you rather than just looking at you.

Nicholas Mann: It's like someone you live with, you know they do one minor gesture and you already know what it means.

Alexander: We have some more music here, mostly music and a bit of talk that I want to ask you about after we hear it.

MUSIC (rehearsal discussion)

Alexander: O.K. Working on some intonation, I guess, there towards the end. The reason I selected that moment was -- that's not the tempo?

Marcy Rosen: No, no. That's very, very under tempo.

Alexander: Do you do that a lot?

Marcy Rosen: Yes, to hear pitch and for very accurate execution of ensemble.

Alexander: Really, ...

Nicholas Mann: That's pretty standard for all groups.

Alexander: Well, I've learned something. Maybe some of the people who are listening have too. I think that thing comes up again in the last segment, but just before we get to it -- have you ever listened to a playback of a rehearsal like this before?

Marcy Rosen: No.

Alexander: What kind of a feeling is it?

Marcy Rosen: Sounds just like (inaudible). (laughing)

Alexander: Is rehearsal something that you go to expectantly and happily, or dreading it?

Marcy Rosen: It's like going to work every morning. It's the same, I would think, it's the same kind of thing. You have to prepare beforehand, it's like doing homework. Then you go and you work together. I wouldn't say that I get excited to go and rehearse, but I don't dread it.

Nicholas Mann: There are different phases. For instance when you're first starting a work I think there is a sense of excitement, especially if everyone likes the work -- which is usually the case, otherwise you wouldn't be playing it. Then there is the problem with a work such as this Mendelssohn which we've played a lot -- the feeling that it's old, old stuff and that we don't really have any new ideas at the moment, that you'd almost rather put it away for a year and come back to it with fresh experiences.

Alexander: If younger (even then you, although it's hard to imagine) string players are listening and thinking about what a rehearsal should be like and having difficulty -- what have you learned about how to rehearse? If there is something -- if there's one thing Marcy, that you've learned over the years.

Marcy Rosen: To make excellent use of the time. It's very hard to do and you can spend hours and hours working on one thing when in fact everybody is trying for the same ideal but the (inaudible) there is so varied it takes a long long time. I think all of us find that very frustrating. The sheer hours of time and the slowness of the progress.

Alexander: Let's go out on this last segment and I think again you're taking it at a slower tempo and I think we start early on with the decision on what tempo to take it at.

MUSIC (rehearsal discussion)

Alexander: Nicholas Mann and Marcy Rosen from the Mendelssohn Quartet, thank you for going through an exercise that I wasn't sure you'd agree to do. I've learned a lot listening to you in rehearsal and talking about it. Thanks very much.

Marcy Rosen & Nicholas Mann: Thank you.

MUSIC

Alexander: Now, from the Mendelssohn Quartet in rehearsal to the Mendelssohn Quartet in competition performance here at Banff. The time for honing and refining technique is over, it's time now for the kids to show their stuff.

MUSIC

Alexander: Once more we're back in the Green room just moments before the quartet is due to go on.

MUSIC (discussion within the quartet)

(clapping)

Alexander: For their Romantic Day appearance the Mendelssohn Quartet will offer a complete performance of Beethoven's String Quartet in F Minor, Opus 95. It's subtitled the *Serioso*, and that's appropriate because the four young New Yorkers of this ensemble like their colleagues in the nine other competing quartets, are certainly "serioso" about their music and about the task before them this week to make it to the finals of the Banff International String Quartet Competition. Let's hear the Mendelssohns play Beethoven now:

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: We've just heard a complete performance of the String Quartet in F Minor, Opus 95 by Ludwig van Beethoven -- The "Serioso" Quartet played by the Mendelssohn Quartet from New York City: Laurie Smukler and Nicholas Mann violins, Ira Weller, viola and Marcy Rosen, cello. A competition performance from Day Four of the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

Alexander: Well that's a fine performance, one which should help convince the judges that the Mendelssohn Quartet deserves a place in the final standings at the climax of this week-long competition.

(clapping)

Alexander: There are only three non-North American quartets in the field of ten competing this week at Banff. One of those is the precociously talented teenage Hagen Quartet from Austria -- we'll hear from them a little later. Another is Hungary's Eder Quartet, who are just completing three months study here at the Banff Centre with Hungarian master chamber musician Zoltan Szekely. And the third non-North American quartet here is the Brodsky Quartet from England, who however they fare in the competition, plan to stay on as well to work with Mr. Szekely after the finals end. We're going to hear the Brodskys play some Schubert momentarily but first we're going to meet two of them, first violinist Michael Thomas whose sister Jacqueline is the quartet's cellist, and recently-arrived violist Paul Cassidy.

Does the competition get any easier as the days go by? Michael Thomas:

Michael Thomas: Well for us I think the most difficult was the second day. That was the day we played the Mozart K464, A Major, and that was the one which we haven't been learning for so long as the other pieces. So I think we're over the most difficult hurdle.

Alexander: Michael, have you been listening to some of the other quartets? Or have you been staying away?

Michael Thomas: I've been staying away. I think Paul's listened though, I don't like to listen because I get too influenced by everything I hear. And if a day before or a couple hours before I'm about to play a certain piece I hear someone playing in a way in which I like or dislike it will always affect the way I play it the next time.

Alexander: Paul if indeed you have been hearing some of the other quartets, I'm interested -- I think it's we all know now the standard of this competition is extremely high -- have you been finding, have you been noticing a sort of range of styles, range of approaches from various quartets that you can talk about?

Paul Cassidy: Very definitely. There's a lot of American quartets here of course, and their style in comparison to ours is very, very different, and I'm not sure that I can -- it would take too long to put into words -- but it's very different.

Alexander: People speak of an aggressive, forceful, extroverted American style.

Paul Cassidy: Yes, it tends to be, I find, quite highly strung, if you know what I mean. And it's very "hyper" playing I find. Then there's us from Britain, and I don't know if we're a very good example of English playing -- probably not since half of us aren't really English. And then we have the Hagen Quartet from Austria and Eder from Hungary, and it's a nice -- and also in the panel we've got a good international there's lots of people.

Alexander: Michael I'm interested in what I read here in the competition brochure. I'll just quote: "Although its members are still in their early twenties, the Brodsky Quartet has been in existence for eleven years." That must mean that you started awfully early.

Michael Thomas: Yes, when I was eleven, my sister was ten, we used to get together, four of us, after we'd played in the local youth orchestra. We used to go back and either play ping-pong or if we were getting bored with that then we'd start to play chamber music. The first piece we actually learned was Bartok 5, because it was one of our favorites, but we learned that from about the age of eleven -- not with much success -- and it went on from there, really.

Alexander: There are a lot of quartets here with family connections, either siblings or with a marriage or two connecting the quartet. I think that there are some cases where that family tie really helps the quartet musically. I think there's one or two cases where if that family connection leads to personal differences it can lead to musical differences. What's it like for the two Thomases in the Brodsky?

Michael Thomas: Perhaps Paul should answer that.

Alexander: As an outsider, Paul --

Paul Cassidy: It's good. It's very good I find, because I feel that they both can let off steam at each other without -- you know, in a family you can say just about anything to your brother and he knows what you're saying. Whereas if it's a friend or someone else who's in the quartet then you have to, obviously, even if you have been together for twenty years, you still have to be somewhat careful of what you're saying. You can't just say anything to people. But I find that Mike and Jackie, being brother and sister, they can let off steam at each other and even if Mike gets annoyed with me maybe sometimes he'll say, "Jackie, what are you doing?" And that way, that cools rehearsals quite a lot, and it's very good. They certainly, although they're very different personalities, musically they're very co-ordinated.

Alexander: You don't feel then Paul, as the most recent arrival to the quartet, in particular, there's a kind of inner circle of the Thomases in the quartet?

Paul Cassidy: Oh, no.

Alexander: Michael Thomas, first violin of the Brodsky Quartet, as we speak it's still a day or two before the jury begins to announce publicly any of their findings and move towards finals and semi-finals. Even saying that in front of you makes me embarrassed because it's such a difficult thing for you, I can understand that.

Michael Thomas: Not at all. No.

Alexander: At this point, before you know what's going to happen, was it worth spending the money and the time and travelling half way around the world to come to Banff?

Michael Thomas: No. (laughing) You wanted me to say yes! No, I will say that certainly was worth the money. A lot of the money we got from the British Council, but no it was -- it's been really worth it and hopefully it will carry on being worth it because we are going to be studying with Mr. Szekely, after the competition finishes.

Alexander: You're staying on here for a while.

Michael Thomas: That's right, hopefully seeing some of the mountains as well.

Alexander: Was it that opportunity to study with Zoltan Szekely too that was part of motivating you?

Michael Thomas: That was the first reason we were going to come here and we were luckily able to tie the competition in with it. Hopefully something will come of it, but if not we're not bothered.

Alexander: Paul Cassidy, Michael Thomas from the Brodsky Quartet, thanks a lot, and continued success this week.

Paul Cassidy & Michael Thomas: Thank you very much.

(clapping)

Alexander: Now let's hear the Brodsky Quartet with their Romantic competition entry. The first movement from Franz Schubert's String Quartet in G Major, Opus 161. This is a key round for the four people from England. Solidly in the middle of the pack, they must really make a positive impression on the judges today, Day Four of the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

MUSIC

Alexander: The opening movement of the String Quartet in G Major by Franz Schubert, played by the Brodsky Quartet from England, in Day Four of the Banff International String Quartet Competition. Arts National is covering this world class competition all week long for seven successive nights, including special weekend pre-emptions on CBC-Stereo.

Apart from the excitement of the on-stage competition performances by the ten quartets, there's a whole other side to this event -- the behind-the-scenes organizational aspect. And I must say that the complex task of making such a large competition run like clockwork has been splendidly managed by the staff here at the Banff Centre under the watchful eye of competition administrator Ken Murphy. From time to time in our coverage of the competition, Arts National has already taken you backstage at Banff. Let's return there now for a slightly more extended look at what's involved. There's one person assigned to look after the six judges, there are two runners to get the quartets from their residences to the practice rooms and on from there to the Green Room of the theatre. Then there is a stage manager and her crew to run things in the hall itself. In this next sequence leading up to a typical competition performance, you'll hear first the voices of stage manager Lynn MacDonald backstage talking via intercom with the booth at the back of the auditorium, where lighting and sound technicians Ray Marshall and Grant Bardsley are awaiting their cues.

(CONVERSATION OVER INTERCOM WITH MACDONALD, MARSHALL AND BARDSLEY)

Alexander: We're sitting in a room that's become familiar to all of us covering the Banff International String Quartet Competition this week -- it's called the Green Room. There's not a bit of green anywhere in the room but that's the traditional name I guess, stage manager Lynn MacDonald, for the room where the artists are immediately before they're on stage. I have no idea where that name comes from, do you?

Lynn MacDonald: None whatsoever. I have only worked in one place that actually had a green Green Room.

Alexander: Do you always work the kind of twelve, fourteen-hour days that you're working this week?

Lynn MacDonald: Usually for a concert you'd have a set rehearsal time where you would have heard them play what they're going to play and then you just put them out on stage, but as it is now, with the constant turnover you have no idea what. It's the first time I've heard it. Set-up is basically the same, it's just different in that it keeps going on.

Alexander: There are a number of adjustments though, I've seen a whole lot of different music stands come through here and a lot of different chairs at different heights. How do you find out what each individual quartet's needs are in that department?

Lynn MacDonald: I had an hour with each quartet two days previous to the competition and at that time they played with all the chairs that I had in the theatre and they tried out our stands, and a lot of them have brought their own stands that are usually a great deal lower than what we've got.

Alexander: Now there are a number of peculiarities about this event. There is a public audience, which is something you're familiar with and you've already talked about putting on an event that pleases an audience without a lot of embarrassing pauses and so on, you've also got a special part of that audience -- six jury members. I take it you have to know they're all in and comfortable and set. How do you find that out?

Lynn MacDonald: Two ways, I have a peep hole backstage where I can see some of them and also I can talk to the booth. They're sitting right behind the jury members, and they can see if everyone is sitting down, if they're comfortable, if their briefcases have been opened, they have their scores and pencils and we wait for them and then we go.

(INTERCOM CONVERSATION WITH STAGE CREW. Clapping as quartet walks on stage after cues from stage crew).

Alexander: Having eavesdropped on the behind-the-scenes action at the Banff International String Quartet Competition, let's return now to the focus of attention here this week -- the music itself played daily in competition by our ten young string quartets. The outstanding young Hagen Quartet from Austria is back on stage now for their Romantic repertoire offering here at Day Four of the Competition. Four Austrian teenagers play the String Quartet in C Minor, Opus 51, No. 1 by Johannes Brahms.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: We've just heard the String Quartet in C Minor, Opus 51, No. 1 by

brothers, a sister, and their schoolmate from the Mozarteum, their average age nineteen. Superb musicians in the European style, front-runners from day one of this Banff International String Competition, and popular favorites too -- as you can hear.

(clapping)

Alexander: For the first time all week the Hagen Quartet's Brahms performance has elicited an extra call-back and three rounds of applause from the audience here at the Margaret Greenham Theatre at The Banff Centre.

(clapping)

Alexander: We're approaching the end of Day Four of Arts National's week-long coverage of the Banff International String Quartet Competition, and maybe I should just take a moment to remind you of where we are right now and what still lies ahead. Tomorrow, Day Five of the competition, we'll know who the semi-finalists are and we'll hear them play from the 20th-Century repertoire. That embraces a lot of music, from Ravel and Debussy right down to a brand new work which has been commissioned as the set or imposed piece for the Banff Competition. That's the Movement for String Quartet by Canadian composer Harry Somers. We don't yet know precisely how many semi-finalists there will be, some of the ten quartets doubtless will be eliminated, down to perhaps seven, who will advance to that semi-final round. Saturday, Arts National will broadcast performances from that semi-final round and we'll also be able to tell you at that point who the five finalists are -- all of that on a special edition of Arts National from Banff, Saturday evening beginning at 8:05 p.m., 8:35 in Newfoundland. So by then we'll know who's going to win prizes. But we won't know in which order, from the \$12,000 first prize plus a matched set of bows and an extensive North American concert tour, for the first place finishers, down through the substantial second, third, fourth, and fifth prizes and the special jury results, the final rankings, the last word from the jury, be listening Sunday night at (8:05 p.m., 9:35 in Newfoundland, for a seventh and final special Arts National broadcast. A Banff Competition wrap-up, including as I mentioned, the announcement of the final standings, the presentation of the prizes, performances by the winning quartets and interviews from everyone concerned, a complete post-mortem. So I hope you'll stay with us as Arts National's on-location coverage of the Banff International String Quartet Competition moves towards its climax over the next three evenings.

Just before we leave you for tonight, though, let's hear once more from one of the top-ranking quartets at this point in the proceedings. On stage now the four young women from Boston's Lydian Quartet. Here they are to play the third movement, marked Lento assai, cantate e tranquillo from Ludwig van Beethoven's last string quartet, the Opus 135 in F Major -- a beautiful piece of night music to close.

MUSIC

Alexander: Isn't that lovely. Music from Beethoven's last string quartet, played by the Lydian Quartet here at Day Four competition in Banff, Alberta. I think I have time before we close to thank, at this point, the many dedicated CBC people who have been working long and hard under difficult, trying conditions to bring these programs to you. From CBC Calgary, executive producer of radio arts and music, Duncan McKerchar, music producer Rick Phillips and technicians Don Pennington and Harold Kilinaski. And from the Arts National unit, executive producer Keith Horner, music producer Neil Crorie, and studio director Phillip Coulter. Thanks to you all, guys, but don't relax yet because we have three more broadcasts still to come. I'm Ian Alexander saying Good Night for Arts National until tomorrow evening, when we'll bring you Day Five of our on-location coverage of the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

FRIDAY

April 29, 1983

Alexander: Good Evening and welcome to Arts National. I'm Ian Alexander broadcasting on location from backstage in the Margaret Greenham Theatre at The Banff Centre School fo Fine Arts in Banff, Alberta. If you've been listening throughout the week you'll know that we're here to cover the prestigious, exciting Banff International String Quartet Competition -- that competition now moving towards its climax with initial eliminations, the semi-final round, further eliminations to reduce the field to five finalists, and then one more round to determine the order in which those finalists will be ranked. And Arts National will bring it all to you tonight and on special weekend editions of our program -- tomorrow evening an hour earlier than usual and again on Sunday at our usual weeknight time.

The week began with ten competing quartets who had already survived the initial audition procedure just to make it to Banff. They will have performed five days running by the time the jury announces its first decision, winnowing the number down to seven semi-finalists. Even now we're awaiting that initial crucial news which will be heart-breaking to twelve young musicians but desperately welcome to the rest. That news expected later tonight. Right now let's go to the lobby of the Margaret Greenham Theatre, where competition organizer Ken Murphy is explaining the procedure to an expectant gathering of quartet members and the public audience.

Ken Murphy: After the jury had deliberated and made its decision we will post that decision, in writing, in three places which the quartets frequent. One is the lounge in the residence where they live, the second floor lounge in Lloyd Hall, the second is the bulletin board just opposite their rehearsal rooms here, and the third is the bulletin board in their entrance to their practice studios. So wherever they happen to be at whatever time it is ... I am told by the jury they don't expect it to be a long time before the first eliminations are made, so if you do want to hang around and go to one of those places I think it would be an hour to an hour and a half. When that announcement of who is remaining in the competition tomorrow is made it will also include what they will play, when they play again tomorrow.

Alexander: Some competitors here at Banff have been stand-outs from the start, among them the Hagen, Colorado and Lydian Quartets. But there are others, too, who are strong steady contenders for a place in the finals, and they deserve some further attention tonight. One of them is the Vermilion Quartet, formed here at the Banff Centre a few years ago when all its members were studying string and chamber music with the resident faculty. We're going to meet the Vermilion Quartet later in the program, but right now let's hear them play the opening movement marked *Anime et tres decide* from Claude Debussy's only String Quartet, the Opus 10 in G Minor.

MUSIC

Alexander: The first movement from the String Quartet in G Minor, Opus 10, by Claude Debussy, played by the Vermilion Quartet, who are turning in strong consistent performances at this Banff International String Quartet Competition. Well, I've said before that the all-female Lydian Quartet from Brandeis University in Boston is definitely among the frontrunners at this competition, and Contemporary Day at Banff, as well as the required Harry Somers' piece, can only help this group I think, because they have a special affinity with the modern repertoire. This is at least partly because of their involvement with the composers' workshop at Brandeis, and it also seems to fit in well with the Lydians' own intellectual, or at least thoughtful, approach to music making. In preparation for hearing the Lydian Quartet play part of an unfamiliar new String Quartet by woman composer Betsy Jolas I asked first and second violinists Wilma Smith and Judith Eissenberg about all this. Does struggling with difficult modern scores lead to a better understanding of the earlier classical and romantic works as well?

Judith Eissenberg: I think that they are similar in that they are both works of art that are made up of gestures, and the fun in contemporary music is to find the gestures that are the same in all kinds of music. Emotional gestures, form gestures, and then to go back to more classical music you find them again and I guess each one builds on the other and it helps. It's a conviction that it's all music and that it can be played the same way.

Alexander: In just a moment or two we're going to hear the Lydian Quartet's performance from Contemporary Day at the Banff Competition of a piece that may not be familiar to many of the people who are about to hear it. Nor may its composer for that matter. Shall we start with Betsy Jolas. Can you tell us a bit about her, Wilma?

Wilma Smith: Well we don't know a lot about her, and we haven't met her unfortunately, although we hope to, but she lives in Paris most of the time, she has visited the States on a number of occasions and has been in residence at Yale University, I think. She's, I think, in her fifties, somewhere around that age, and she's written a number of string quartets of which this was the third.

Alexander: It also bears the title *Neuf Etudes*. What is the significance of that, Judith?

Judith Eissenberg: Well that is I think why it's a good piece to play at a competition. Each etude is demonstrating different string techniques, pizzicato or chords, and there's two aleatoric movements. So you run through them all and get a good idea of what the instrument can do, and they're all tied together with similar gestures and stretto-like things, and then there's a final movement, the ninth one, that sums it all up. It's called Summing-Up, appropriately enough.

Alexander: I think this was one on a list of set pieces of set competition pieces at a previous competition that the Lydian Quartet was in?

Wilma Smith: Yes. We were in a competition in Evian in France last year, and this was one of a list of, I think, nine pieces that we had to choose from in the Contemporary section of the competition.

Alexander: Does it have that virtuosic challenge that seems to be common to competition set pieces?

Judith Eissenberg: I think what's most virtuosic about it -- well, maybe there's two things: One, the individual techniques -- some of them are new, which we had to learn -- and then just putting it together because it doesn't happen the same way each time, and being able to feel free with it when we play it.

Alexander: O.K. we'll listen to it. Wilma Smith and Judith Eissenberg from the Lydian Quartet, thank you.

And now let's hear the Lydian Quartet play two short movements from this String Quartet No. 3 by the contemporary composer Betsy Jolas -- contemporary music played by the Lydian Quartet in competition this week at Banff, Alberta. On Day Five of Arts National's Banff String Quartet Competition coverage we're listening to seven of the ten competing quartets play twentieth-century music as we await announcement of the semi-finalists who will proceed on the weekend to play-off for five final positions in the standings. Our Arts National shadow jury is still uncertain whether England's Brodsky Quartet will make it all the way to the finals, but they're certainly worth hearing again now, as for that matter are all ten of these young quartets, not one of whom has not turned in one or more outstanding performances somewhere in the course of the week to date. After all, the Brodskys came to Banff fresh from winning top place at this year's European Broadcasting Union String Quartet Competition and that in itself is a high recommendation. Here now is the Brodsky Quartet with the final portion of the 1964 String Quartet by Polish Composer Witold Lutoslawski.

MUSIC

Alexander: And that's a Day Five String Quartet Competition performance from Banff. The conclusion of Lutoslawski's String Quartet played by England's Brodsky Quartet, still in the running as we approach the semis and the finals and warmly greeted by the audience for their efforts here tonight.

(clapping)

Alexander: Coming up next, a feature part of our program which I think you'll find rather interesting. Most music competitions, including this one at Banff, include a section devoted to a so-called "imposed" or "set" piece which all contestants must play. In this case the work in question was commissioned expressly for the occasion from Canadian composer Harry Somers, with the financial assistance of the Canada Council. It's entitled Movement for String Quartet and it's Somers' fourth work in this form. All ten participating ensembles at the Banff International String Quartet Competition played this work on one day for the judges; in a few minutes we're going to hear one of those performances. But first let's meet the composer himself. Harry Somers had hoped to be here to hear his work played, not once but ten times -- a rare honour for a composer. He was going to adjudicate it and decide which quartet should receive the special \$500 Couvoisier prize for the best performance. Unfortunately however, another commission commitment has kept him in the east, but we've managed to reach him anyway on the line from Toronto. Mr. Somers I get the feeling there are some rather special ground rules when you come to write a competition piece like this one.

Harry Somers: Well, you really are given a series of limitations, and I think you have to respect them. In case the limitations were imposed on a number of levels; one, the quartets came from a variety of countries, and in those countries the exposure to contemporary music is varied as to contemporary notation, so I had to limit myself to a manner of writing and a manner of notation that could be comprehended actually anywhere in the world today - conventional notation because a lot of contemporary music, in order to go beyond the bounds of 1-2-3-4 and traditional pitch areas, has had to invent notation and in some places in the world it is simply not understood, so that certainly was imposed on me.

Alexander: Are there other limitations?

Harry Somers: I think due to the constraints of time there is a certain limitation in technical difficulty. Mind you, in all this my first object is this: It is a tough proposition, because the first object is to create music - something that goes beyond the explanation of its parts and becomes a responsive experience which is the peculiar nature of music, and yet you have to form a solid intellectual basis of organization, and in this case I set out to really, I suppose, make them use their bow arms. The left hand technique is not all that difficult, that is, the fingering, the pitch area; but the great difficulties lie in the rhythmic area, the nuance. The bow is, after all, like the singer's breath to the string player, and it is there that they really have to be not only efficient but terribly accomplished.

Alexander: Was it in your mind, since this is a competition set piece, to really challenge them at the virtuosic level, to create a piece that was above all else difficult to execute well?

Harry Somers: Well, I think there is no point unless there is a challenge to these competitors, who after all are quite an impressive list. They are leading musicians in their own countries, they are really reaching for the top of the profession, and I felt there was no point unless the composer gave them a challenge.

Alexander: Many, many competition pieces have been written over the years in Europe as well as in America. Many of them are heard several times at that competition one year and then disappear into oblivion.

Harry Somers: I think very often, sure, they drop out of sight. Well, a lot of music drops out of sight I suppose. The composers too often -- maybe I'm being presumptuous -- set out simply to be clever rather than making their pieces also a musical challenge in the broad sense of the word. And I think after the cleverness leaves there's not much else left. I hope you give it a go, that this has a dimension beyond simply its difficulties or its virtuosity, that it is a piece of music, and at least that's why I think things drop out. I always treat it absolutely as if I'm creating any other piece of music.

Alexander: Again pursuing the tradition of competition pieces, often the competition piece is presented to the competitors, as part of the challenge, when they arrive at the competition and not before. In this case things were managed rather differently, and the people at Banff managed to put ten copies of your score simultaneously into the hands of the ten quartets about a month before the competition began. Is it you sense that your Movement for String Quartet would have been too difficult to learn in a week?

Harry Somers: Oh, absolutely. It would have been futile to do so, and actually a ridiculous challenge. A month is just about right to test their abilities to learn a new work and see if they can bring it to life in that period of time. I think it's just about the right period, a week would have been just impossible.

Alexander: Harry Somers, thanks for talking from Toronto. I might just close by telling you we've been chatting with the young quartets and they assured us that this is perhaps the most difficult piece they have ever had to learn, so if challenge is part of a competition piece you have certainly succeeded in that side of things.

Harry Somers: Well, good.

(REACTIONS OF THE QUARTETS TO THE SOMERS WORK)

Alexander: Actually there's a wide range of feeling about this new Somers piece among the ten quartets who had to play it in competition this week at Banff. Very shortly we're going to hear it performed by the Vermilion Quartet. When we caught the Vermilions in the corridor I asked them about it, they referred us to their colleagues from the Brodsky Quartet, who apparently made a mini-drama to go along with the music.

Vermilion Quartet: Yes, they wrote a whole play - an opera, "A Somers Outing" they called it. They're on this train, and the train goes to Siberia, and then Ken Murphy comes on the train and sees the Hagen Quartet drinking. "No, No, No!" Then there's a big chase, and a beautiful woman comes on at the climax and seduces the conductor, and at the end the train crashes and all the people die. This is all written in the music.

Alexander: Once we'd heard that we naturally had to rush right off to the Brodsky Quartet and get the story from the horse's mouth. Remember all quartets received the score of the Somers quartet about a month ago in mid-March, but each took their own approach in preparing this difficult work. Paul Cassidy, the violist of the Brodsky Quartet tells us what they did.

Paul Cassidy: The unfortunate thing about this particular piece is that the past month or two we've been very, very busy at home. We had a lot of repertoire to get through, and although we had the piece for a month or so we didn't actually start to work on it 'til we came to Banff.

Alexander: Which is what often happens at a competition.

Paul Cassidy: That's right. We sort of started work on it a couple of days ago. It just happened that during the first rehearsal we realized that it's a quite difficult piece. People were getting very annoyed with each other, and the whole thing was grinding to a halt. So suddenly we had this idea that the beginning sounds a little like a train, because it's all on the one note, and it gets progressively faster and faster for 20 bars, and it sounds quite like a steam engine getting up power. So this, of course, set everyone's mind and imagination going, and from there the piece ended up, instead of being a movement for string quartet, becoming "A Somers Outing". (Pun Intended) So we in fact renamed it "Movement for Steam Engine". It's just a silly little story really about a train which leaves Banff and goes for miles and miles across the plains, and one or two exciting things happen. For instance, a young boy is found in first class compartment with a third class ticket, and there's a chase, and there's a little climax, and so on and so on. Then there's a dialogue between the viola and the cello and the two violins, and we made this out to be the guard who has finally caught the boy. He's saying "Why haven't you got a ticket -- why haven't you got a ticket?" Silly little things like that, and at one point a very beautiful lady enters the train (which was played by our cellist, our one lady member). She has quite a dynamic entry towards the end of the piece, and this was a beautiful woman joining the train".

Alexander: How does the journey end?

Paul Cassidy: I'm afraid the journey ends in chaos, and the engine overheats, and in fact the train derails and crashes, killing all the

Alexander: Did you confront them with this?

Wilma Smith: Not really. We told them we were disappointed that we didn't hear it, but ...

(clapping)

Alexander: Well, we've heard what three of our ten competing quartets think of this new set piece now, and I guess it's time to hear the music itself, which will be played by a fourth ensemble. Banff's own Vermilion Quartet is on stage now with their required competition performance of the newly commissioned Movement for String Quartet by Canadian composer Harry Somers.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: You've just heard one of ten performances given this week at Banff of a single work, the Movement for String Quartet by Canadian composer Harry Somers, commissioned with the assistance of the Canada Council as the set piece for the Banff International String Quartet Competition. We heard it played by the Vermilion Quartet.

The Vermilion Quartet have lived and worked at Banff on and off over the past several years. That may be why they seem relatively relaxed during this tense competition week here. At least they were relaxed when we brought them all over here to our Arts National temporary studio for a conversation that began naturally enough with the impressions of the Harry Somers Quartet which they have just played. You will hear the voices of Mary Kathryn Parker and Melinda Moncure violins, Canadian cellist Rolf Gilstein and off the top, newly arrived violist Richard Marshall, on the general reaction here at Banff to the Somers.

Richard Marshall: You should see what's on the board in the warm-up room. "WANTED - HARRY SOMERS - \$500 REWARD - DEAD OR ALIVE, PREFERABLY DEAD."

Alexander: Why? Is it just because it's so difficult?

Richard Marshall: If it felt gratifying. I don't know ...

Rolf Gilstein: It seems very mathematically conceived, and almost every note has a direction on it, a marking - forte, fortissimo, accent - so 90% of it seems to be intellectual, and how well you can play this fortissimo accent as opposed to this triple fortissimo.

Alexander: Isn't that what competition pieces are supposed to do, though?

Melinda Moncure: It seems as if it's written as a test. You know, for that purpose only and not really because it's a great piece of music.

Alexander: So you don't think it's going to get heard in a lot of concerts?

Richard Marshall: I don't think we'll play it again.

Rolf Gilstein: Actually we were very surprised when we taped it the first time, because playing it, being inside it, you don't get an overall picture. It's very difficult, because we're all in our own worlds, in the middle section especially, with two against three against five and against seven. We have to be as independent as possible. It's really difficult to get outside and hear the over-all effect, and it was much better than we felt it was while we were playing it.

Richard Marshall: I guess when we first got it, it seemed so overwhelming. I mean you know, just an incredible piece put to us as a test, and we kind of resented the fact that we couldn't find any credible musical idea as the main theme - as the hook. It seemed to be, as Rolf said, that the mathematics and the intellectual came first, and for us it was hard to grab on to that at first. And when you have to slave in a practice room for hours and hours and hours, just trying to figure out how it gets together

Alexander: (Explained the \$500 prize) But apart from its being a separate item, do you think the jury is going to take it very seriously into account when they come to judging the semi-finals and finals?

Melinda Moncure: No. I think they wanted the day off.

Richard Marshall: I think that as Rolf said, (we were speaking about this earlier), any time you get out on the stage you leave an impression, and inasmuch as any impression is important, it's important; but I don't think in the final analysis it will hold somebody back if they didn't play well. I think the first four days of competition are much, much more important, obviously, than this. So I think that the fact that they are having a special prize for this And we decided that the first prize should be that you did not have to meet Harry Somers!

Alexander: Mary Kathryn, may I address this question to you? I have had the sense, listening in on quartets in the Green Room, and elsewhere, that the Vermilion seems to be among the most relaxed and easy going. Is that because of your association with Banff or is it just the kind of group you are?

Mary Kathryn Parker: Well, we're taking the competition as a recital more than a competition and we feel very fortunate to be here, and of course Banff's a beautiful place, and we have a lot of friends here. And we've grown as a group this year a lot and we're very happy about showing our friends how much we've grown and even that has been an accomplishment to us.

Alexander: Are you saying that you aren't tense and nervous about going to be in those finals.

Mary Kathryn Parker: Just the word "competition" makes you nervous -- even the word. Of course I haven't tried to be backstage too much with the groups so I don't know how much...

Alexander: But I've seen you relaxing in the Green Room, watching the monitor. There are other quartets that are resolutely staying away, except when they want to conduct psychological warfare and come and sit right down in the front row.

Mary Kathryn Parker: I enjoy listening to other groups because I'm hoping to get something out of it besides it being a competition. I enjoy hearing other people play. And it makes me play better because seeing the way someone reacts on stage or seeing a beautiful phrase that someone turns makes me go and play better. I thought it would make me nervous but it really doesn't at all it helps a lot. They're our friends, we like them very much, every one -- we kid around in the reading room together and play games and you know we're rooting for everybody -- everybody's in it together and that's a little more relaxing than thinking that they're your enemies -- they're the competition. I don't think anyone here feels that way. Maybe some people like to practise up until the very last minute, But, you know, we've practised, and it's time to listen now.

Richard Marshall: We're here to play and learn and that's it.

Rolf Gilstein: I think all of us agree that this week we've heard some of the greatest quartet playing we've heard in our lives, and you have a quartet working all year on a piece and in some cases it's much better than, say, one of the great quartets going on the road playing something thirty times -- being dead tired. So you hear terrific inspirational performances.

Alexander: Yes, I've felt that too. I felt that even if you had one of the world's great quartets in their maturity, you know, and you went to a concert, in some senses for them and for everyone it's just another concert, if you can put it that way, as opposed to the extra edge of this. Melinda Moncure, can I ask you, what was the route by which you came to Banff in the first place? How did you end up here -- not now for this competition, but in the first place?

Melinda Moncure: Well I had just finished school at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and I didn't want to go right away to get a master's degree because I was kind of tired of school and everything. You get really frustrated in the university or conservatory because you just don't have the time to concentrate on practising. You have orchestra and schoolwork and everything else. I heard about Banff from my teacher and applied and asked various people that had been here mainly in the summers and they ...

Alexander: No pun intended, always go back to Somers ...

Melinda Moncure: So I just applied and they have quite a very good scholarship fund, so they -- I just decided to come here, and it was just great. The first year I was here just by myself as an individual practising and playing as much chamber music as I could. I wanted to find a chamber music group and I thought this might be a place to find it.

Alexander: So you came wanting to get involved with quartet playing or chamber music.

Melinda Moncure: Right. But all I did that year was just play with various people, different pieces but never found the right people for a group until the very end of the year. Rolf and Mary Kathryn and I use to play downtown at the Bistro, a restaurant, in the evenings, just for fun, and we liked playing together and they had been the previous summer to the quartet program. They have an excellent Quartet program for six weeks here in the summers, so they asked me if I wanted to come.

Alexander: You said it again, ... (Somers/summers)

Melinda Moncure: I know, it keeps coming back. So I said sure so we came here for the summer session; it worked very well so we came back for the winter last year as a quartet, worked and then after that we got an assistantship at DeKalb, Illinois, to study with the Vermeer String Quartet. So it's going pretty well with us.

Alexander: I find this process interesting because I've been talking to a lot of the quartets about how they came together. I guess the other extreme is a quartet that found itself all members of an orchestra and teaching at a University and the requirement to join the orchestra was that you would teach at the university and form the university string quartet. Which seems a bit arbitrary, I mean it might not have worked out, but it seems to have worked out pretty well. But Richard, let me ask you about what Melinda's just been saying. It seems to me, she seems to be talking about that whole process of finding the right people, very important likely.

Richard Marshall: Well this is extremely important to me because I had a fairly successful string quartet last year, here at the Banff Centre. I came up here with a quartet, pre-formed, called the Norquay Quartet. And I was first violinist with that quartet. And we did a lot together, and competed in Portsmouth in England last year, and made the semi-finals and the National Film Board of Canada followed us around and everything. So we were doing quite well, but it didn't work out because of the personalities and the types of players that we were, so at the end of last summer we decided to try to find, there's that word again -- "summer", we decided to find other arrangements and I went off to look for another quartet or to start to perhaps start practising perhaps for an orchestra job with the idea that perhaps I wanted to meet the right people in the end, but maybe take a little bit of time off from quartet and then this quartet asked me when they had a viola opening whether or not I would consider playing viola and --

Alexander: What was your background in the viola at that stage?

Richard Marshall: Zero! I had played it in one quartet in high school.

Alexander: And how long ago was that?

Richard Marshall: Maybe ten years ago.

Alexander: No, no. How long ago was it that you were approached and you had zero experience on viola?

Richard Marshall: December last year. So I started with the Quartet in January of 1983.

Alexander: And we're not yet at the end of April, 1983!

Richard Marshall: No. And so this has been for us an incredible push, learning all these pieces, for me especially, learning the viola at the same time, and it has been an incredible learning experience all the way round.

Alexander: How has he done! (all agree warmly)

Richard Marshall: I survived the Vermilion, and it survived me. But you know, every quartet has its ups and downs, but the general over-all feeling is an up feeling for sure, and if you would look at the stock market every day I think you'd get depressed. The same is true in quartet rehearsals. If you look every day ... you follow the over-all trend, and our over-all trend ... things have been happening right and left, and we feel really good about it and we hope to be playing more here.

Alexander: There are some quartets that are hinging a decision on whether to stay together on how well they do here. Maybe that's like the flip of a coin. It would be terrible, it seems to me, if they really did think that that should be the basis of their decision. You're going to stay together?

Rolf Gilstein: Oh sure. We're here just to play, and this has no bearing on how we relate to ourselves, what we think of ourselves. Everything you do in the professional world is a by-product of your own love for playing chamber music, and that has to come first above everything.

Alexander: In conversation at Banff, the Vermilion Quartet -- formed here, but by no means the only quartet with strong ties to the Banff Centre and to its excellent teaching program. Many of the individual young players have studied here. For instance for the past three months the Eder Quartet from Hungary have all been here studying with their distinguished countryman, Zoltan Szekely, the thirty-five year leader of the Hungarian Quartet. And here are the Eders now to play a bit of Hungarian music, appropriately enough. This is the Scherzo: Alla bulgarese from Bela Bartok's String Quartet No. 5.

MUSIC

Alexander: That's nice. I think you can hear the natural affinity of that Hungarian quartet for that Hungarian music. From the String Quartet No. 5 by Bela Bartok, that was the Scherzo: Alla bulgarese played by the Eder Quartet, whose first and second fiddles, Pal Eder and Erika Toth, are also husband and wife. Interestingly, the same marital relationship exists between two members of our next group, violist Ira Weller and first violinist Laurie Smukler from the New York based Mendelssohn Quartet. So just for comparison's sake why don't we hear how the Mendelssohns play Bartok and contrast their rather brash American sound with the more typically European approach of the Eders?

(clapping)

Alexander: We're approaching the semi-finals now and every note of every performance is crucial. From Twentieth Century day at the Banff International String Quartet Competition, this is the Mendelssohn Quartet to play the String Quartet No. 3, composed in 1927 by Bela Bartok.

MUSIC

Alexander: That was the String Quartet No. 3 by Bela Bartok, played by the Mendelssohn Quartet of New York, one of ten young quartets who have spent the last week playing daily for six eminent and demanding jury members at the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

Alexander: Well, very soon now the judges at this Banff competition will be ready to make their first public announcement of the three quartets which have been eliminated from moving on to the semi-final round of competition, and of course by definition the seven others, which must return tomorrow with the works which the judges want to hear them play in order to make the further selection of the five finalists. Naturally, until it's all over, later in the weekend, no member of the jury is prepared to speak publicly about any of the contestants in specific terms, but we have managed to prevail upon three of them to talk with us about the judging process in general and their views on this competition. So joining me now for an Arts National Banff Jury round table: Raphael Hillyer, the founding violist of the Juilliard Quartet; Emanuel Hurwitz, distinguished English chamber musician and violinist, and Andrew Dawes, the leader of Canada's flagship Orford Quartet.

Gentlemen, I know that the other three who listened to the preliminary audition tapes to select these ten quartets from the twenty-one who initially applied, those three selectors all came up with the same choices. Do you have the sense that this jury might turn out to be equally unanimous? Let's start with you, Andrew Dawes.

Andrew Dawes: I can imagine a quartet competition and the jury part being just slightly different, or even a lot different, from say a big competition of soloists, because I think quartet members are used to making some kind of consensus and finding some way of doing this, not the sense of "my way is the only way".

Alexander: An interesting point.

Andrew Dawes: So that part, I thought, was probably going to make the final session a lot easier, because everybody is used to dealing with differences of opinion.

Alexander: Coming to Raphael Hillyer, for a moment, and picking up what Andrew Dawes has just been saying, is it your sense, for yourself and maybe for some of your colleagues on the jury, that personal preferences - subjective styles - perhaps the styles associated with the quartets that you are in or have been in, will color your decisions, your preferences, the marks you assign?

Raphael Hillyer: Well, going back to Andy's comment, I think that's a very fine insight, that the fact that we have spent our lives as quartet players, coming to a common agreement even though we may have started from different points of view; that's the only way we could have functioned. There is a great deal of the tradition involved in quartet playing and quartet learning and teaching, and that of course is going to play a very strong role, I think in how we judge these people. But one of the things about quartet players, apart from reaching a consensus eventually, is that we realize that there are many, many different ways of playing great music, and many of these ways are really acceptable and honorable and musical.

Alexander: Emanuel Hurwitz, is it your sense that you are judging these performances against some mythical ideal "Ur-Quartet" or are you judging them against one another and taking let's say the potential they displayed as well as their actual performance into account?

Emanuel Hurwitz: I think if one is listening to masterpieces being played, I am just listening to find out how much I get from this, how much I am involved in it, how much this quartet is doing for me with this piece. I'm not saying to myself, "This is something being played by under 35's or under 25's." But I do recognize that occasionally something is played and I'll say to myself, "Do I like this or not?" Then I'll say to myself, "How did I play this when I was 25?" And one has got to have, I think, a mixture of affirmation and interest and at my age a fatherly feeling toward the young people. I think their talents are very high, and I reckon that some of the finest performances we are hearing now, if you heard them on the radio or on a record you wouldn't say, "This is by a 25 year-old or a 55 or a 75-year-old."

Alexander: So is there a sense - I think I used this metaphor with Andy the other day - that is some way, to some extent, you are tasting the new wine before it is laid down to fully age, and guessing which is going to be a "good year" ultimately?

Emanuel Hurwitz: Well, that is, I think, a rather romantic approach. I'm listening to a performance - it's just as simple as that. I'm not going to say that this is going to mature and be fantastic in 20 years' time. I'm hearing it now.

Alexander: Andrew Dawes, as the youngest member of the jury, do you worry about, do you think much about, the fact that we have been told that two or three of these quartets are making a decision to stay together or not contingent upon how well they do here? Is the sense of having the destinies of forty young musicians to some extent in your hands bothering you much?

Andrew Dawes: No, in fact it doesn't, because I regard this competition and all competitions as being coincidental and incidental to people's development, because I think a quartet or anybody who goes into a competition weighing whether they stand to gain more than they stand to lose if they don't win or if they do win, there's a sort of balancing act going on there. But it doesn't make that much difference if you win a competition or lose one, because a career is something that takes years and years to develop.

Alexander: Raphael Hillyer, given what Andy Dawes just said, do you think there is a need for a competition like this one? This is a new string quartet competition. The organizers feel that they may make it an every two or three year event. There are lots of competitions, some for string quartets. Is this a useful addition to the international scene?

Raphael Hillyer: Well, this is really not an easy question to answer, because many of us have views about the importance of competitions in general. Some of us think that competitions have become almost a way of life that is divorcing itself from musicianship. It is becoming a matter of which competitions you win, and how lucky you are with the judges, and not how wonderfully you play. These are not things people used to think about. When the Budapest Quartet, which was the greatest quartet in the world, came into being it would have come into being without having any competitions, and there weren't any in those days. I wouldn't say that any competition is necessary. Certainly in string quartets I think they could all be dissolved and quartets would go on, and they would be discovered, and there would be audiences, and there would be some who are very highly esteemed and some who would perhaps have less glamorous careers. You say, "Is this Competition necessary? How about next year having still another Competition and the next year still another?" I don't really think that that is a necessary element. But this one has been produced and planned in such a wonderful way that it is really very special one. I don't say that just because we're here ... I think really undeniably it is quite a remarkably organized competition, with great respect for the requirements of the players. It's the one competition I've ever seen or have been involved in in which the players are considered first, every aspect of their capacity to produce their best. And that's really a marvelous idea behind this whole thing.

Alexander: Mr. Hurwitz, I wanted to ask you, -- we have had the opportunity, which you have had to deny yourselves until this is all over, of meeting and talking with the young performers. Two or three of the quartets are composed entirely of members who already have busy orchestral careers at their young age. Do you think that it's possible for a quartet to achieve greatness and have orchestral responsibilities simultaneously?

Emanuel Hurwitz: Well, I can't see that it's possible for them to have enough time to rehearse a really important and large repertoire under those circumstances. I think it is perfectly valid for the people to meet in an orchestra and eventually say to themselves, "I think it's time we took a chance and somehow manage to work without this background".

Alexander: Andrew Dawes, I am wondering whether there is a general rule among the jury - are you giving equal weight to each day's performance, to each round, to each period of the repertoire? Do they all count equally in your final totals, your numbers, your decisions?

Andrew Dawes: Oh yes, certainly. I don't make any difference at all. And it has been very interesting for me to hear the different works, because sometimes if a person has a very strong personality they're going to play a certain type of material better than another, and so it has held true, and sometimes it hasn't held true, but I am not saying, "Well, I think if they do the Beethoven or the Mozart well that's going to count for more than if they do, say, a Bartok well".

Alexander: So consistency must be very important to doing well here.

Andrew Dawes: Oh yes, consistency sure. But just the ability to take a certain work and do it very well, even though it is really quite a different type of playing ... maybe it should be more aggressive or maybe it should be very pure and classical or whatever. My way of marking is strictly on how I think that piece should be done and how I think the kids did it.

Alexander: Does that mean that it is possible that the winning quartet, in your view, will be one that has turned in consistent plateau performances as opposed to one that might have turned in at least one top-notch, knock-out performance and one or two others not as good? Do you see my point?

Raphael Hillyer: This gets into the area of how we are thinking in our own room. Personally I would like to skirt that kind of thing. It's getting a little bit too much, for my feeling, into the mechanism. And certainly that is going to be something that will be dealt with when we are all together.

Alexander: May I just ask you ... we're getting close to the point where the semi-final and final rounds will take place. This will be an opportunity for you to hear quartets again play repertoire that you asked them to play. Mr. Hurwitz, would you prefer to hear something different? Are you looking for confirmation of an impression or for more variety when you come to judge the semi-finalists and the finalists, hear them again, what will you be wanting to hear?

Emanuel Hurwitz: This is something we haven't discussed among ourselves yet, but my own personal instinct ... I'd like to hear them play something different. It's as simple as that.

Raphael Hillyer: Well, we have now heard them playing for five days, or will have at the end of today. We've heard them play in the various styles which their repertoire has been drawn from. First of all of course there was a free choice, but then we had the Classical style, Romantic and Twentieth Century, and that really gives a very broad spectrum; that's the literature, really. So I think that in terms of all those categories we know now pretty well, I think how each quartet approaches each one of these styles, and I think for me it would be a matter of confirming rather than getting new information.

Alexander: Raphael Hillyer, Emanuel Hurwitz, Andrew Dawes -- three of the jury at this Banff International String Quartet Competition. I don't envy you your job, but I'm glad to hear that apart from making all those notes and listening so attentively you're also getting to hear such good music. Thank you for being so frank and generous with us today.

Hillyer, Hurwitz & Dawes: Thank you.

Alexander: Well now we know something more of the jury members' preferences and principles and I think it's time to find out how all of that translates into practical decisions. Let's go now to the stage of the Margaret Greenham Theatre here at the Banff Centre where string quartet competition administrator Ken Murphy is about to announce the judges' choice of quartets which will advance to the semi-finals.

Ken Murphy: Ladies and Gentlemen, the jury for the Banff International String Quartet Competition has chosen the semi-finalists. At the next round of competition sessions, beginning at 10:45 tomorrow morning, the following seven quartets will compete, in this order: From New York, the Mendelssohn Quartet; from DeKalb, Illinois the Vermilion Quartet; from Boston, Massachusetts, the Lydian Quartet; from Manchester, England, the Brodsky Quartet; from New York City, the Colorado Quartet; from Budapest, Hungary, the Eder Quartet, and from Salzburg, Austria, the Hagen Quartet. Thank you very much.

(clapping)

Alexander: Well there you have it, the names of the seven young quartets who will advance to the semi-finals of this Banff International String Quartet Competition, and you'll hear all of them play from that semi-final round tomorrow on a special Saturday night edition of Arts National, beginning at 8:05 p.m., 8:35 in Newfoundland. Our congratulations to the seven string quartets who have survived the semi-final cut -- the Hagen, Colorado and Lydian, the Mendelssohn and Brodsky, the Eder and Vermilion. And warm wishes to the three who were eliminated at this point the Manchester, the Harrington, the DaVinci. It's not just kindness to say that they too played very well this week. The standard at this competition is extremely high, it was an honour simply to have been invited to participate. The judges simply had to choose between good and better. Indeed, I understand the DaVinci Quartet who didn't make it into the semis have been already engaged to give a public concert this weekend in Calgary. Up here in the mountains at Banff we're now ready for tomorrow's semi-final round of competition. Just before we leave you tonight we have time for one more performance by one of the leading quartets who are still the running, the all-female Colorado Quartet. This has been Twentieth Century day at Banff. We've tried to select interesting and moderately accessible modern music that shows the quartets at the top of their form. And to close we have a most sensitive reading of a subtle and delicate work. It's Anton Webern's 1909 Opus 5, Five Movements for String Quartet. They're five delicate little miniatures, really, and here to play them for us now is the Colorado Quartet.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: Five Movements for String Quartet, Opus 5, by Anton Webern played by the four young women of the Colorado Quartet, formed at the University of Colorado, now in residence as teaching assistants at the Juilliard School of Music in New York.

(clapping)

Alexander: That concludes Day Five, Twentieth Century day, here at the Banff International String Quartet Competition. I hope you enjoyed hearing the music and feature interviews as much as we enjoyed bringing them to you tonight on Arts National on location from the Banff Centre.

(clapping)

Alexander: Still ahead the weekend semi-final and final rounds as we find out which five quartets will receive prizes from the jury, and in which order. There's a lot at stake and a lot more great chamber music making to come on our special weekend broadcasts. I'm Ian Alexander saying Good Night, and inviting you to be with us tomorrow night for more from the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

SATURDAY

April 30, 1983

Alexander: Good Evening. My name is Ian Alexander. I'm speaking to you on location from the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts in Banff, Alberta, and I'm introducing to you a special Saturday night edition of Arts National, CBC's weeknight concert hall and music journal of the air. International Concert, normally broadcast at this time, will not be heard tonight in order that we can bring you a special presentation -- the semi-final round of the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

This exciting and prestigious event began last Sunday when ten young string quartets from around the world, all of them under thirty-five years of age, gathered here for an intensive week of most demanding international class musical competition. For the first five days all ten quartets were required to play every day. First a free style choice of their own and then in turn a Classical, Romantic and Modern repertoire work as well as the set, or "imposed", piece for this competition, the new Movement for String Quartet by Canadian composer Harry Somers. Throughout these five days of competition performances the six-member jury was listening, evaluating and making notes, but they were announcing nothing publicly. The first news we heard was when the judges eliminated three quartets from advancing to the semi-finals. They were the Manchester, Harrington and DaVinci Quartets -- all from the United States. The seven remaining played again for the jury in semi-final round competition after which their number was reduced again to five -- five finalists, all of whom will receive prizes, although the order of their ranking has yet to be determined.

Tonight on this special edition of Arts National at the Banff International String Quartet Competition we'll hear the semi-final performances from those five finalists as announced at the end of the semi-final round by competition organizer Ken Murphy — speaking from the stage of the Margaret Greenham Theatre here at the Banff Centre.

Ken Murphy: Ladies and gentlemen, the jury has deliberated, and here in alphabetical order are the finalists in the competition: The Colorado Quartet, the Eder Quartet, the Hagen Quartet, the Lydian Quartet, and the Mendelssohn Quartet. The next session is tomorrow at 10:45 a.m. See you then.

Alexander: Well, now we know which five quartets will finish in the money at this Banff Competition, but we'll have to wait until tomorrow to hear in which order they'll eventually be ranked by the jury. Through the past week on Arts National we've been combining competition performances by our fine young quartets with features, interviews and documentary material on the competition itself. Tonight we're going to focus on the music as played by the five quartets who've made it to the finals, as just announced by Ken Murphy. We'll hear their semi-final round contributions. Those are the ones that earned them their place in the final standings. As you listen to them play tonight I'm sure you'll be as impressed by the quality and maturity of their musicianship as everyone here at Banff has been. And you might enjoy deciding for yourselves the order in which you would rank them; you can be a kind of "shadow jury" if you like. Then tomorrow night beginning at 9:05, 9:35 in Newfoundland, tune in again for the final round and hear what the official Banff jury's findings turn out to be.

The first group called upon to play during the semi-final round was the Mendelssohn Quartet from New York City — Laurie Smukler and Nicholas Mann, violins, Ira Weller, viola and Marcy Rosen, cello. Ira and Laurie are husband and wife and Nicholas is the son of Robert Mann, founding leader of the Juilliard Quartet. Now these young people faced a special kind of pressure. They'd made it to the semi-finals against stiff competition, they'd only been told some twelve hours beforehand that they had even survived the first cut and that they were scheduled moreover first up the next morning. Perhaps most frightening of all they were only told then which work from a predetermined list the jury wanted to hear them play. That's the strain of this kind of international competition and perhaps because of it the Mendelssohn Quartet's performance began a little more shakily than we've come to expect, having heard them earlier in the week so many times. But by the time they'd reached the final movement of Ravel's String Quartet in F Major, which is what we're going to hear them play tonight, they'd really hit their stride and they displayed all the hard driving, action-packed energy that's typical of this brash, young, North American ensemble. Let's hear the results from semi-final round competition at Banff. The Finale marked Vif et agite from the Quartet in F Major, by Maurice Ravel, played by the Mendelssohn Quartet.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: The Finale from Maurice Ravel's String Quartet in F Major, played by New York's Mendelssohn Quartet -- the semi-final round performance which earned them a place in the finals of this Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

Alexander: The Mendelssohns were the first quartet of the morning and they played well enough to advance to the finals. Next up was the young Vermilion Quartet, formed at Banff last season when all its members were studying here. For that reason alone the Vermilions had a lot of friends in the audience. They played well and consistently all week. They were among the more relaxed and happy groups around the Centre. But some reason their performance of Beethoven's Opus 132 Quartet in A Minor wasn't quite up to the demanding standards set this week at Banff and the jury was forced to eliminate them from the finals. I'm sure the Vermilions will be heard from a great deal in the future though. They've really only begun to regroup after acquiring a new violist, Richard Marshall, just at the beginning of this year. I'd say it's to their credit that they made it this far.

We come now to the afternoon semi-final session, and first the Lydian Quartet from Brandeis University in Boston -- one of two all-women quartets in this field of ten and perhaps the most thoughtful, almost intellectual, group here this week. The Lydians are particularly strong in the contemporary repertoire, we've learned, but this semi-final round was an opportunity for the judges to assign works which would test each competitor particularly in areas of potential weakness. And so the Lydians were asked to go back to the Classical period and perform a work by Mozart. They acquitted themselves well, particularly in the beautiful slow movement which we're going to hear them play next. "Stylish" and "idiomatic" -- those were the sort of adjectives one heard after the Lydians' semi-final performance. We're going to hear them play the second slow movement from Mozart's String Quartet in C Major K465, subtitled "Dissonance". From Banff the Lydian Quartet:

MUSIC

Alexander: That was the slow Movement from Mozart's "Dissonance" Quartet in C Major, K465, played by the Lydian Quartet, one of five young quartets who survived this semi-final day of the Banff International String Quartet Competition and went on to be among the five finalists.

You're listening to a special weekend edition of Arts National on CBC-Stereo, being heard in place of International Concert tonight. It's the first of two weekend programs presenting semi-final and final round action from this week-long competition.

I'm Ian Alexander and I must say I found it tremendously exciting to be here at Banff covering the event, not just because of the suspense of waiting for the jury's ultimate decisions, not even just because of the astoundingly high overall musical standard which has been established from the outset by all ten competitors, but most of all, I think, because of the realization that this is the sound of the future of international chamber music, and a very fine sound it is too.

The level of playing at the competition is epitomized by the Colorado Quartet, they're the other all-female entry. Formed at the University of Colorado, this group is now at the Juilliard School of Music in New York where they're teaching assistants to the Juilliard Quartet itself. They recently won the coveted Naumburg prize. That's one of the world's top chamber music honours. The Coloradans combine youthful North American energy with mature European refinement of playing. The drive they can muster to give a work a clear through line is complemented by the exquisite perfection of their tonal quality. Their semi-final day performance of a Brahms quartet is such a representative example of what they can do that we've chosen to play it in its entirety.

(clapping)

Alexander: Listen in particular to the graceful third movement with its excellent viola playing by Francesca Martin. She's studied here at Banff, for I believe it's eight years. Let's sit back now and enjoy Brahms' String Quartet in B Flat, Opus 67, No. 3 -- as played by the Colorado Quartet, a young ensemble clearly at a peak in their still-young careers. This is what this Banff International String Quartet Competition is all about.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: You've just heard a complete performance of the String Quartet in B Flat Major, Opus 67, No. 3 by Johannes Brahms. It was played by the four young women of the Colorado Quartet in their semi-final round of competition appearance here at the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

And now that you've heard it I'm sure it will come as no surprise when I tell you that the Colorado did advance to the finals. In fact the buzz here at Banff is that they've got a good shot at one of the two top final positions. We have two more string quartet competition finalists still to hear on this special Saturday night's edition of Arts National from Banff. But first we're going to meet one of the six membered jury for the competition. That's a distinguished panel indeed. In fact many of the young players told me the eminence of the jury was one of the main attractions of this event. Raphael Hillyer, founding violist of the Juilliard String Quartet, Andrew Dawes, first violin of Canada's Orford Quartet, Emanuel Hurwitz from England, Eda Banda from Hungary, and Piero Farrulli from Italy are all on the jury. But the doyen of them all, the senior chamber musician here at Banff this week is Mischa Schneider who spent 36 years as the cellist of the famed Budapest String Quartet, and now on the eve of his eightieth birthday remains active as a teacher and a coach. He takes a very keen interest in the young people to whom the torch of the string quartet tradition is being passed. I asked Mischa Schneider what he thought of the music he was hearing this week. Music being played by young people who are in some cases little more than children.

Mischa Schneider: I don't think they are children! Some of them play like experienced artists. There are very young people, but it is a very good thing that they are young and can play so well. String quartet is now a very popular ensemble. In my time, you know, when the Budapest Quartet started, there were only a few quartets, and now you have dozens of them, and they all play well, more or less. It's very difficult to differentiate.

Alexander: I have felt indeed that even for the semi-finals, let alone the finals, the distinctions are very fine ones, very close ones. There's not that much difference between the top and the bottom here, really.

Mischa Schneider: You are quite right. That's absolutely right. Some of them are more cohesive as an ensemble, but they all play well - all of them - they're all good instrumentalists.

Alexander: Is the difference one between technical proficiency and musical insight and understanding?

Mischa Schneider: Oh yes, absolutely. You know, what I find is that when you are young your blood circulation is faster and you tend to play certain things faster, and when you get older and more experienced you sort of quiet down. This is what I personally sometimes find in the young ensembles. They're so eager, so terribly eager to do it and sometimes do it a little bit too fast or don't enjoy a phrase.

Alexander: I think the average age of the competitors here is about 25. You, Mr. Schneider, were 25 I think when you entered your first professional quartet. Do you ever think of comparing how it was when you were 25 when you see these 25-year-olds?

Mischa Schneider: Well, when I was 25 I made exactly the same mistakes that they make. It is very rarely that you find a young man in his 20's who has already the poise over the material, over the whole work. You find it very rarely, for instance, a young pianist like Perahia or Peter Serkin, son of Rudolf Serkin. As he played as a young man when he was 17 or 18 he already had such a command of the idea - what the work is. This happens very rarely. When we recorded the so-called "Dissonant" Quartet by Mozart the first time we played it very fast. Then I met a quartet and they played for me and I said, "Tell me, why do you play so fast?" "Well, we heard it from you, from your record." So you see really it has something to do with age. But there are exceptions like Tocanini. To the end of his life he was always full of fire and full of temperament, and his tempos were always very fast.

Alexander: There are now many competitions for musicians of all kinds, even a few for string quartets like this new one at Banff. Today it is almost necessary for a musician or a quartet to establish a career. I'm not talking about how well they play, but to be noticed and get engagements. How did you do that with the Budapest Quartet in 1930?

Mischa Schneider: I can tell you we did it in a very, very difficult way. We played during the season and in the summer time there were no festivals and no competitions, so we didn't make enough money to live the whole year through, so we had to go and get some money somewhere to be able to live through the summer months and study, and we were working, and when September came we started the season and paid all our debts, so that we became known and started to earn money, but it was very, very difficult for the Quartet to be able to make a living only from quartet playing. It was very difficult. I think I can say almost with surety that we were the first quartet that could make a living only from quartet playing, not having a job.

Alexander: You are not only a legend in the musical world, especially in the chamber music world; you are a great teacher. I am wondering what you think about the kind of teaching and the atmosphere of conservatories and universities today. There are so many more students. We talk about the competitive environment. Do you think that young musicians are being taught technical tricks rather than a tradition?

Mischa Schneider: I don't think it's the teacher who teaches them. It is the young people, because technique now has become one of the most important things. The bigger the technique, the faster you can play, the better.

Alexander: From what you are saying I would suspect that you prefer what might be called a "European" quartet sound and tradition to this brash, technically exciting and dramatic "American" quartet sound.

Mischa Schneider: I don't think you can inject nationalities here. I don't think so because this is finished now, Americans or Europeans, because American quartets go to Europe and Europeans go to America. It is now the same thing everywhere. You can say that a Canadian Quartet plays differently than a Czech quartet or a Hungarian quartet, but I don't think so.

Alexander: I find it interesting to go back a little bit to when you were talking about playing it fast, or strong dynamics, and all those kinds of things that you associate with youth. Some people have said that it was the Budapest itself, especially with the change of first violin, that in a sense broke the ground for that new brasher sound. Have you ever heard that before?

Mischa Schneider: I have heard that, but I don't think that it was. Well, the 1st violin is always the one that is the sort of visiting card of the quartet, because in all Classical and Romantic works the first violin has the most. And if the first violin is a good player, then the other three sort of get nearer to him. But with the Budapest Quartet - you see it started first with four Hungarians in Budapest.

That is why it became the name; and then when the second fiddler left Roisman came in and he became 2nd violin; then the 1st violin left and Roisman became 1st violin and my brother became 2nd violin. I came in and then the last one was Kroyt, and then it became a Budapest Russian quartet, and I'm sure you have heard the story they say Heifetz tells:

One Russian is a nihilist;

Two Russians are a chess game;

Three Russians are a revolution;

Four Russians are the Budapest String Quartet.

But I think we were lucky that the four of us who came together - the four Russians - had the same idea about performance, about playing, about accentuations. And of course we were very much influenced by Casals.

Alexander: I was going to ask you about that, because your career has circled around the name of Casals from the beginning until Marlboro.

Mischa Schneider: That's right. You see, Casals was at Marlboro for almost 15 years. Every year he would come and conduct and have master classes.

Alexander: But you worked initially with Casals' assistant.

Mischa Schneider: Well, I went to Casals at Prades where he lived, to study with him, and I studied also with his assistant in Paris, Alexanian, and my brother studied with Casals. That was a big influence, but what you say about accentuations and so on, this was very much the influence of Casals.

Alexander: Are you listening in particular to the cellists this week?

Mischa Schneider: No, not necessarily. I listen to everybody. You know, when you have played in a quartet for many years it sort of seethes in your brain - the whole four instruments.

Alexander: Have you been surprised? Have you heard approaches to familiar works that made you say, "Hah! That's interesting".

Mischa Schneider: Oh yes! Very, very many surprises. I mean, in all these six days when we have listened every day to ten quartets, each one playing a different work. And then some of the quartets play the same work, like Ravel. We have had Ravel three times. And each one has an entirely different idea about tempos, allegretto in Mozart in the Minuet, for some it was slower and for some it was faster. These are all little differences, but the main thing I think in quartet playing is the whole work, how they take it.

Alexander: May I wish you a happy 80th Birthday, in case I don't see you again before 1984?

Mischa Schneider: How did you know that I am going to be 80?

Alexander: Sooner or later all of us must be 80. Thank you very much.

Mischa Schneider: It has been a great pleasure.

Alexander: That's octogenerian cellist Mischa Schneider, grand old man of string quartets, one of the six jury members for this Banff International String Quartet Competition. As Arts National's special weekend coverage of the semi-final and final rounds of the competition continues now, we return to the afternoon and evening semi-final sessions. Seven semi-finalists competing for five places in the final standings. That meant of course, that two had to be eliminated. One as I've already told you was the Vermilion Quartet and the other, rather surprisingly to some of us, was the Brodsky Quartet from England. The Brodskys came to Banff fresh from sweeping first place in all categories of this year's European Broadcasting Union String Quartet Festival and Competition and their playing throughout this week at Banff showed us why they'd won in Britain.

One of the questions that has been much debated and speculated upon throughout the week has been exactly what the judges' criteria were. Of course they're not about to discuss the subject publicly. But judging simply by the decisions they've made so far it would appear that their first considerations are technical proficiency, accuracy of intonation, and ensemble blend. Perhaps it's not surprising, given their seniority, that the jury may tend to be just a little bit conservative in their preferences and that might be why the rather more eccentric interpretations favored by the Brodsky Quartet did not succeed in gaining them a place in the finals.

The next successful quartet from the semi-finals was the Eder Quartet from Hungary, the oldest group competing at Banff, and the only one to have made a commercial recording to date. They were formed a decade ago at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. Family relationships come up again in this quartet as they do in so many of the young foursomes who entered the competition. First violinist Pal Eder is married to second violinist Erika Toth. He's also the brother of the cellist in the group, Gyorgy Eder. From their semi-final competition performance we hear now the Allegro Finale of Brahms' String Quartet in A Minor, Opus 51, No. 2. The Eder Quartet —

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: One movement from a string quartet by Brahms played by the Eder Quartet from Hungary. They were rather dark horses this week at Banff. Many of us were surprised that they seemed to be playing rather less well than had been expected of them. But it's almost as if they were holding back until the final, critical rounds. For whatever reason they came from behind when it counted and turned in a Brahms performance of sufficient depth, warmth and emotional involvement to earn them a place in the finals.

(clapping)

Alexander: Well so far you've heard four of the five young quartets whose performances at this semi-final round of the Banff International String Quartet Competition sufficiently impressed the judges to advance them to the finals: the Mendelssohn, Lydian, Colorado and Eder Quartets.

Alexander: And we come now to the real story of this entire week, both musically and personally. The Hagen Quartet hails from Salzburg, Austria. Lukas, Veronika and Clemens Hagen learned to play chamber music almost as soon as they could walk and talk at the knee of their father, who is principal violist with the Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra. Along with their schoolmate Annette Bik, they are the youngest quartet competing at Banff; their average age is nineteen. But you'd never know that to hear them play. They have already won both the jury first prize and the audience prize at last year's Portsmouth Competition in England and they show every sign of moving all the way to the top here at Banff as well. There's really not much more to be said about these phenomenal, almost preternaturally mature youngsters; their music tells it all.

(clapping)

Alexander: By the time of this semi-final round word of the Hagen Quartet's outstanding performances had got around the Banff Centre and Margaret Greenham Theatre was full to capacity to hear them play Beethoven's Second Rasoumovsky Quartet. And certainly no one who came to hear them went away disappointed. Utterly composed on stage, they showed us once more how completely they've already imbibed the great European tradition of intimate, tightly unified quartet ensemble playing. This is the String Quartet in E Minor, Opus 59, No. 2 by Beethoven played by the teenaged Hagen Quartet.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: Ludwig van Beethoven's String Quartet in E Minor, Opus 59, No. 2, played by the young Hagen Quartet from Salzburg, Austria, in semi-final performance at the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

Alexander: We know that the Hagen Quartet is in the finals at this competition. We've virtually assumed that in fact from their first appearance here. What remains to be determined is the ranking of the five finalists. Many people are betting the Hagens will go all the way to the top.

(clapping)

Alexander: International Concert returns in its normal time period one week from tonight. And tomorrow night beginning at 9:05 p.m., 9:35 in Newfoundland, Arts National's special weekend coverage from Banff returns once more as we present the final round performances and the announcement of the prizes. It will be a dramatic occasion with lots more wonderful music. Please join us then. For now I'm Ian Alexander saying Good Night on location from the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

SUNDAY
May 1, 1983

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Alexander: Good Evening. I'm Ian Alexander speaking to you on location backstage in the Eric Harvie Theatre at The Banff Centre School of Fine Arts in the Rocky Mountains of Banff, Alberta. Welcome to an extraordinary extended three hour edition of Arts National, CBC-Stereos' weeknight concert hall and music journal of the air. We're presenting tonight the finals of the Banff International String Quartet Competition. Because of this special broadcast Two New Hours will not be heard tonight and we have also preempted the first hour of Music To Listen To Jazz By. There will be jazz after midnight and both programs will return as usual one week from tonight. Right now though, we, along with nearly one thousand members of the audience at the Eric Harvie Theatre, are eagerly awaiting the start of this final round of string quartet competition from Banff.

Let me take just a moment to set the scene leading up to this evening's climactic event, particularly for those who may not have been following our nightly week-long coverage of the competition. It all began seven days ago, last Sunday, when a total of ten young string quartets from around the world -- seven from the United States and one each from England, Austria, and Hungary -- all their members under the age of 35, arrived at The Banff Centre to begin a gruelling round of daily competitive performances before a panel composed of six jury members, all of them distinguished senior chamber musicians in their own right. All ten quartets played every day for five days straight -- first a freestyle piece of their own choosing and then in succession a Classical, Romantic and Modern repertoire work, and finally the set piece for this competition, which all participants had to learn within a month-long deadline period before the competition began. That's the new Movement for String Quartet by Canadian composer Harry Somers, commissioned with the financial assistance of the Canada Council.

Now all of this happened before the judges announced any decisions at all, though of course they were listening closely and making extensive notes after each performance. Only on Day Five were the semi-finalists announced -- seven quartets who proceeded to the next stage while three were eliminated. That semi-final round took up another day and it resulted in the elimination of two more quartets.

We've been here all week listening to the performances and covering the competition for Arts National and I can tell you the standard of playing, even among the five quartets who didn't make it to the finals, has been extremely high. So you can just imagine how good the music will be that we hear played tonight by the five finalists. We already know that all five of the quartets still in the running will have a share in the final standings and in the cash prizes -- \$30,000 in all allocated in amounts from \$12,000 for the first-place finisher down to \$1,500 for the fifth ranked quartet. But what the judges must still determine after tonight's performances is who gets which prize. And there's also a special \$500 award for the best performance of the imposed Harry Somers piece. And to the grand prize winners, much more besides: a matched set of beautiful new instrument bows commissioned from Edmonton archetier Michael Vann, and a major North American tour of concert engagements, starting this coming week at the Guelph Spring Festival and concluding at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. So there's a lot riding on the outcome of tonight's final round at this Banff International String Quartet Competition.

Alexander: Apart from all the material rewards I've just mentioned there's of course the satisfaction and the considerable prestige of doing so well in the face of such world class competition and being judged worthy of the highest honors which can be bestowed by a jury of senior chamber musicians. All of our participating quartets are already playing at an international professional level and the best of them -- well, ... splendid chamber music. Then, after the judges retire briefly to consult -- announcement of the winners and the presentation of their awards. This is the final night of the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

And I believe our first finalist is just about ready to come on stage, the Eder Quartet, formed ten years ago at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. First violinist Pal Eder, his wife Erika Toth, second violin, his brother Gyorgy Eder, cello, and the group's violist Zoltan Toth -- who is no relation to Erika Toth, by the way. They've all been in residence at Banff for the past several months undergoing intensive coaching in the late Beethoven quartets with Hungarian master chamber musician Zoltan Szekely. Immediately after this competition is over tonight, they'll be back home to their friends and their family. The Eders are the oldest quartet in the competition, although they, like all the others, are still under 35. They're also the only ones, so far as I know, who have recorded commercially. Given all that, we expected them to emerge as early front runners; instead they started the week just a bit slowly but they built from there towards a strong finish in the final days of the competition. I asked cellist Gyorgy Eder, earlier today, if he'd expected the level of competition at Banff to be quite as high as it has been.

Gyorgy Eder: I'm surprised how good they are. We took part in two international competitions in Europe -- in Evian and in Munich, and I think there was not the same high level as here.

Alexander: Everyone's very tired. Is it especially hard for you?

Gyorgy Eder: Of course it was hard because we studied with Mr. Szekely for almost four months and we had no chance really to perform the pieces we were working on.

Alexander: Does that mean then that as the week has gone on, yes you are more tired but in a sense you have been able to settle in -- you're more comfortable now, you're in fact maybe even playing better now than at the beginning of the week?

Gyorgy Eder: For sure. We feel that we play better now than at the beginning. We were not ready, I think, to play our best at the start.

Alexander: That's Gyorgy Eder, the cellist with the Eder Quartet, first in the field of five finalists tonight at the finals of the Banff International String Quartet Competition. In the Eric Harvie Theatre the lights are dim now, the audience is quiet, a spotlight illuminates four chairs about to be occupied by the Eder Quartet from Hungary.

(clapping)

Alexander: Here they are now bowing and taking their places. A tense moment for them all. They're first off in this final round of competition here at Banff. And for the final round the Eder Quartet has been asked by the jury to play Franz Joseph Haydn's Quartet in D Major, Opus 76, No. 5.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: From the Eric Harvie Theatre at The Banff Centre in Banff, Alberta, we've just heard a performance of Haydn's Quartet in D Major, Opus 76, No. 5, performed by the Eder Quartet of Hungary. They're the first of five finalists in this climactic event at the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

Alexander: And you can hear the quality and the quantity of the applause from the audience in the Eric Harvie for that first of five performances tonight.

(clapping)

Alexander: The Eder Quartet, the oldest quartet in this competition, but still under 35 years of age -- on their way home to Hungary after several months at Banff. What a calling card they've left behind tonight.

(clapping)

Alexander: And back on stage -- two brothers, the wife of one and their friend. The Eder Quartet from Hungary.

Up next in tonight's final round is the all-female Lydian Quartet in residence at Brandeis University in Boston. A little earlier today I asked Lydian Quartet first violinist Wilma Smith what the foursome's mood was at this stage of the proceedings.

Wilma Smith: We're very relieved that this is the final performance. It's been a very gruelling week. It seemed much longer than a week and I think that the general feeling among a lot of the contestants is "Thank God this is over!" We've been pretty happy with what we've done. It was difficult at first, but it seemed to get easier as the days rolled by. Actually, I did feel some influence from listening to the other groups, not so much the way we play but just certain aspects like the freedom of playing and things like that. It's been great to hear all the different styles. Every group has been really interesting.

Alexander: Wilma Smith, first violin with the Lydian Quartet from Boston. You know all five of this evening's finalists at this Banff International String Quartet Competition have been asked by the jury tonight to play works which they've already played once before in the course of the past ever-so-demanding week of competition.

Alexander: Of course that will give the judges a second chance to evaluate them in the same repertoire. We've already heard the Eder Quartet; they played that same Haydn, Opus 76, No. 5 last Sunday at the start of the competition. Interestingly that particular Haydn work was also played by three other groups on Classical Day of the competition. It's clearly a popular work with today's young string quartets. The Lydian Quartet who will be with us in just a moment have a particular interest in and an affinity for Twentieth Century music. Their freestyle choice one week ago was the String Quartet No. 3 by Bela Bartok and in their case too the judges have requested the same work tonight. The work that began the competition for the Lydians will also end it. And this I think will be very interesting, because that first performance by the Lydian Quartet a week ago was just a little bit shaky. They have at least been heard to much better advantage since then. So we're going to be interested to see if they, like the Eder Quartet, can improve on their first day's standard here on this last opportunity they have to impress the six-member jury panel of this Banff International String Quartet Competition.

There has been so much wonderful music and so much going on inside the theatre complex at The Banff Centre that we who've been covering it for CBC-Stereo have had few opportunities to get outside and that's a bit of a shame because as most of us know the physical setting here at The Banff Centre is one of its many splendours -- the snowcapped mountains all around and the Bow River running right through the valley. From The Banff Centre you can look across the Bow to the famous Banff Springs Hotel on the other side, and it's been springtime in the Rockies with a full range of weather all the way from brilliant sunshine through driving rain to the odd flake of snow, yes, here in this last week of April. In the Eric Harvie Theatre, the audience is waiting for the second quartet of our five finalists tonight at this Banff competition, the Lydian Quartet, four young women from Brandeis University in Boston. Three of the group, New Englanders by birth and upbringing, the fourth Wilma Smith whom we spoke to, originally from Fiji.

(clapping)

Alexander: And here they come on stage now. In competition at The Banff Center the all-female Lydian Quartet to play Bela Bartok's 1927 String Quartet No.3.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: You've just heard Bela Bartok's String Quartet No. 3, played by the four young women of the Lydian Quartet from Boston -- Wilma Smith and Judith Eissenberg, violins, Mary Ruth Ray, viola, and Rhonda Rider, cello. They're one of five finalists at this Banff International String Quartet Competition. And the applause is drawing them back on stage at the Eric Harvie Theatre.

(clapping)

Alexander: That's the second time this week the Lydian Quartet has played that Bartok string quartet. And it must be about the eighth time they've played before the jury here this week. A gruelling and demanding week for all the competitors. An initial ten reduced to five finalists here tonight, one of them the Lydian Quartet back on stage once more.

(clapping)

Alexander: Next the Colorado Quartet, the second all-woman ensemble in this competition. Both the all-female quartets have made it to the finals. We've just heard the Lydians and the Coloradans are coming next. The Colorado Quartet's track record this week very impressive -- consistent, dramatic, emotionally rewarding, technically proficient performances turned in pretty well day after day. Many people are convinced they'll finish near the top of the standings, though that of course remains to be seen when the judges' decision is announced after tonight's final round is over. Just a few hours ago I caught up with Colorado Quartet cellist Sharon Prater outside the group's rehearsal studio here at the Banff Centre. I asked her whether sheer exhaustion was wearing everybody down at this point, or on the other hand was it a matter of one big last push?

Sharon Prater: Oh, that's difficult to say because I know everyone is very tired because this has been a very, very gruelling week. I do believe, though, there were probably some very good performances turned in today, this being the last chance to make your impression on the jury. It seems that everyone I've talked to has played well, so I'm sure there was a push to the end, as you say.

Alexander: Are you satisfied with the Colorado's week overall?

Sharon Prater: One can never be satisfied with one's performances particularly if it's a situation that has a lot of, you might say, unusual pressure. But I'm satisfied in the fact that we did pull through, you could say. And we had some very wonderful musical moments and I think on the whole, you know, showed some of what were about musically. So yes, I am satisfied.

Alexander: That's Sharon Prater, the cellist of the Colorado Quartet, who will appear next on stage here tonight at the Eric Harvie Theatre in the finals of this Banff International String Quartet Competition. The Colorado Quartet, one of many groups who came here with a past record of competitive successes. And you know that's true of some of the quartets who were even eliminated here at Banff. For instance the Brodsky Quartet from Manchester England. They had swept all categories of the recent European Broadcasting Union Competition but they didn't survive the semi-final cut here at Banff yesterday. The Hagen Quartet, whom we'll hear later, won last year at Portsmouth, England and the Colorado Quartet, who are going to perform very shortly now, heard just before they came to Banff, that they had won this year's coveted Naumburg prize for chamber music. So as I say, these quartets come in to Banff with many successes behind them but treating this week's competition very seriously indeed as well they might.

Alexander: It's a very demanding and gruelling experience they've gone through and there are some fine rewards at the end of it in terms of material cash prizes in terms of recognition and concert tours and the distinction that accrues when you are judged best or near the top by a jury of this distinction too. The lights are dim, the spotlight has come up once more at the Eric Harvie Theatre. And just emerging now from the wings -- the Colorado Quartet.

(clapping)

Alexander: And as the Colorado Quartet seat themselves I should tell you they've chosen to play, for their last Banff appearance, an early Beethoven Quartet. His Quartet in A Major, Opus 18, No. 5. In final round competition from Banff, this is the Colorado Quartet --

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: Quartet in A Major, Opus 18, No. 5. One of Beethoven's early Lobkowitz Quartets, played by the Colorado Quartet. Formed at the University of Colorado -- now teaching assistants at the Juilliard School in New York. Julie Rosenfeld and Deborah Redding, violins, Francesca Martin, viola and Sharon Prater, cello. The Colorado Quartet one of five finalists at this Banff International String Quartet Competition; being called back on stage by the audience at the Eric Harvie Theatre.

(clapping)

Alexander: The Colorado and Lydian Quartets, the two all-female quartets in this competition, both have advanced to the finals and both have played very well.

(clapping)

Alexander: And the Colorado Quartet is back on stage once more bowing to the audience.

(clapping)

Alexander: Well we've heard now from three of the five finalists in the Banff International String Quartet Competition, the young Eder, Lydian and Colorado Quartets. Three impressive performances and there are two more still to come by the Hagen and Mendelssohn Quartets. Because there will be a hiatus at the end of the program, while the jury deliberates its findings in preparation for the final announcement and the awards presentation, the break at this point where you'd expect to find a normal intermission has been kept briefer than usual. However it still allows us time to meet someone whose going to figure promenantly in the ceremonies later on at the end of the evening. Michael Vann is an Edmonton craftsman who has studied the traditional art of making instrument bows. He's a bow maker; an archetier. And he was commissioned to create a matched set of four bows which will be given to the top place quartet at this competition. To find out more about the art of bow-making in general and these bows in particular, let's talk to Michael Vann now.

Alexander: I must admit I'm a complete neophyte in this area. I don't even now how long it takes to make a fiddle bow.

Michael Vann: Normally it takes me about three to four days to turn out one good bow. And in this particular set, I started shortly after Christmas and I finished just shortly after the first of this month (April), so I'm roughly about twenty bows behind my normal annual production.

Alexander: Is there a market for instrument bows sufficient to make this a full-time occupation, for you?

Michael Vann: At this point I am about two and a half years behind in my order book so ...

Alexander: Really. How many people like you are there in Canada, let's say, or North America, that you know of?

Michael Vann: In North America there are a relatively large number. We have three that I know of altogether, including myself in Canada. There are probably dozens just in New York City alone. My teacher of course was in New York.

Alexander: Now do bows wear out and how many bows would a violinist go through in a lifetime?

Michael Vann: Oh, they wouldn't go through any bows at all. We're dealing with bows now that are well over two hundred years old. And they will match year for year the lifetime of what a good violin would be. In fact much longer. A violin does have an extended lifetime, but it has a terminal lifetime whereas the bow doesn't.

Alexander: O.K., we're now getting into an area I wanted to talk about because they do say, you know, that no one's made a good fiddle since Stradivarius or Guarneri or whoever. Is that true about bows too? And are you following old models when you make bows?

Michael Vann: Well I was trained in the traditional French way of making bows so yes I am copying the early French and the late French, especially the late French. They have a tradition of bow making that's about three hundred years old, and differs from the schools of the English and the German of that same era, same period. So I am pleased with the training I have had and having had it in the French way. I am very proud of it and I will definitely stay with it the rest of my life.

Alexander: What makes a good bow? I guess good wood is a good place to start.

Michael Vann: That certainly is the opener. I've rejected many pieces of wood because they wouldn't make a good bow and you wouldn't want to waste your time on stuff that doesn't make a good bow.

Alexander: What kind of wood did you use then for these particular special bows?

Michael Vann: Well I only work in pernambucco. Pernambuco is a sort of generic name we've given a genus of Brazilwood of which the best of it grows in the province of Pernambuco in Brazil, hence the name.

Alexander: O.K., you've got good wood, you've rejected a lot of sticks and you've found four that you're going to use -- what's next, what's important now?

Michael Vann: Well at that stage we start, well we cut them to a rough shape, all of them. I've done over thirty, forty bows to get the four that I liked for this quartet. And then I finished two, roughly sometime during the middle of February, and I rejected them, totally finished, because I still wasn't totally satisfied with them. So you keep trying until you have what you consider to be the best bow for the modern times.

Alexander: What does that mean, "modern times"?

Michael Vann: Well I'm looking at a quartet that will eventually inherit this, or at least tonight will inherit this set of bows,

Alexander: At a young age ...

Michael Vann: At a young age, and they will go on and perform a great deal of modern music which requires a very strong and a slightly heavier stick than some of the early French for instance which couldn't handle Bartok and some of the other more modern works.

Alexander: Is the arch of the bow important too?

Michael Vann: It is extremely critical. Without the arch or at least without a correct arch you find spots in the bow where the bow will not perform. This was originally discovered by a great French luthier, John Baptist Villaume. And he literally wrote it down for all the generations to carry on with. Now there are still secrets that he simply took a logarithmic cross-section of the bow and said this is how the great French maker Francois Tourte made it, so from there on we've managed to discover that the curve itself and the dimensions that he has given us are all very critical to the final production.

Alexander: These four bows are described as a matched set of bows. They all have that handsome frog. We should talk about what a frog is.

Michael Vann: O.K. The frog is the little black part, although it doesn't always have to be black, sometimes it's ivory, sometimes it's tortoise shell. In this particular case the Courvoisier people who commissioned this quartet of bows requested ebony and sterling silver so this is what we've made it from. Now this is the part where the hair lines up with the hand of the player and it slides back and forth and allows the hair to be tensioned to the desired playability of the stick.

Alexander: Apart then from this commonality of appearance, Michael, is this a matched set of bows in any kind of technical way, any kind of physical way?

Michael Vann: Yes, the frogs themselves are extremely similar in appearance. In fact I stylized them so that they would be. And the heads themselves have their own unique shape, each one of them matching the next.

Alexander: Now you don't know yet, none of us know yet, who is going to be given these bows. I would have thought that there was a shape and size and weight and feel of bow that was just right for one first fiddle player from one of these young quartets that wouldn't be right for another.

Michael Vann: That's true. I have had to draw an average, hoping that it would be suitable, but I am prepared at this point to discuss the bow itself with the winner and if they would like changes made we would change the stick, not the frog, and we would build a new stick in the style of the old one so it would be still a matched set throughout. And I would feel much happier to have them have a stick that plays than to have it sit in their case as a momentum of this competition, which is not why I want them to have the stick.

Alexander: I am sure it is going to be a memento and a valuable and a useful tool for the winning quartet. Can we close on a really crass note Michael? Courvoisier commissioned these bows from you, you would know the materials and the labours and so on, what do you think this set is worth?

Michael Vann: Well normally my market price on them is \$5,100 for the quartet. This is if someone came to me and said make me another set --- an ordinary set, this is what it would be worth. Timewise it's worth \$12,000 as far as my time is concerned and the materials.

Alexander: A valuable prize materially and I think sentimentally too. Thank you for building them, thanks for talking about them.

Michael Vann: Thank you, Ian.

Alexander: Michael Vann.

Alexander: You are listening to a special weekend edition of Arts National on CBC- Stereo which is coming to you on location from the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts. All week long we've been here covering the Banff International String Quartet Competition, and tonight we're bringing you the final round performances by the five finalists. We'll also stay around afterwards to hear the jurors ultimate decision and listen in on the awards presentation. Right now our brief break is almost over, the audience is returning to their seats in the Eric Harvie Theatre and we're about to hear from our last two quartets.

Alexander: If there has been one front page story at Banff this week, both musically and personally, it's got to be the Hagen Quartet from Salzburg, Austria. First of all they play so well and on top of that they're so young. Lukas, Veronika and Clemens Hagen learned to play chamber music at the knee of their father, the principal violist of the Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra. They and their Mozarteum classmate Annette Bik sound like a mature string quartet in the grand European tradition. But they look like exactly what they are, teenaged school kids. Well kids or not, the Hagens are taking the sheer physical as well as phsycological pressure of this competition week, completely in their stride -- like the professionals they are. Violist, Veronika Hagen:

Veronika Hagen: We are very, very tired and now I am always sleeping, I think. But when I am on stage, you can concentrate so well and you get practice in concentrating when you are on stage everyday.

Alexander: You forget that you are tired?

Veronika Hagen: Yes, then I forget. And yesterday I was so bad with my stomach but I am on the stage and I don't feel anything. I just want to play and I concentrate and it doesn't matter if I'm tired or not.

Alexander: You are a bit lucky tonight because you're playing the same work you played this afternoon. You're the only ones -- does that make a difference for you that you're playing it again?

Veronika Hagen: Yes, it's a little bit strange. I don't know why we don't have to play another piece but it's hard to play Mozart again. I think it's no advantage.

Alexander: That's the violist of the Hagen Quartet, Veronika Hagen. And I am certainly looking forward to hearing them play Mozart again. They're going to be playing the second of Mozart's three late Prussian Quartets, the Quartet in B Flat, K589. The Hagen Quartet still in their teens as far as their average age is concerned. Last year they won in the Portsmouth Competition in England both the Grand Prize and the Audience Prize and that indicates their musicality on the one hand their charm and appeal and popularity on the other. All of which has been confirmed again this week here at this Banff International String Quartet Competition. The Hagen Quartet, the popular favorites all week long and I can't help but suspect that they've been very impressive as far as the judges go as well. We'll be hearing them once more tonight in just a few moments now playing this Mozart Quartet.

Alexander: Well whether it's a break of a shorter than usual length or a regular intermission, crowd control is always a problem at concerts. I think now the last stragglers in the audience here at the Eric Harvie Theatre are finally being ushered and shoo'd back into their seats so that we can continue. I'm sure that the last two quartets, the Hagens up next and the Mendelssohns, are eager to have the competition part of all of this over so the jury can get on with their final decisions and we can all hear what the final results will be. As you can hear things are indeed quieting down now. Backstage the four teenagers of the Hagen Quartet are waiting. We trust that Veronika Hagen's tummy troubles are completely settled and we look forward to another fine Mozart performance from this European quartet here tonight. Now the lights are down, the spotlight is up ...

(clapping)

Alexander: And here on stage are the members of the Hagen Quartet. Lukas Hagen is the first violin, Annette Bik the second, Lukas' sister Veronika the viola, and their younger brother Clemens Hagen on cello. And we hear now Mozart's Quartet in B Flat, K589, the second of the Prussian Quartets, played by these four teenagers from Austria -- the Hagen Quartet.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: I'm going to tell you who played that Mozart quartet and I want you to remember the name. That was the Hagen Quartet. What they played -- I should tell you that too -- was Mozart's second "Prussian" Quartet in B Flat, K589. But it's the performers who are the story here tonight at the Banff International String Quartet Competition: the teenaged Hagen Quartet from Salzburg, Austria. You're hearing the reception the audience at the Eric Harvie is according to the Hagen Quartet. That's the kind of response the Hagens have been eliciting all week long at this Banff Competition. Last night the first standing ovation of the competition was for them

(clapping)

Alexander: ... and here tonight they're being warmly applauded once again, as you can hear.

(clapping)

Alexander: At the beginning of the week I asked Veronika Hagen if age was important to them -- they are the youngest quartet here -- and she said, "We don't think about it, we hope the judges don't take it into account". With performances like that it doesn't matter how old they are.

(clapping)

(clapping)

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(clapping)

Alexander: I thought that applause might go on all night, but we come now to our fifth and last finalist at this Banff International String Quartet Competition. You know everyone up here at Banff for this exciting and prestigious event has been living in a bit of a time-warp over the past week. To me at least, it seems like forever rather than just a few days ago that the Mendelssohn Quartet from New York played Beethoven's Opus 95 String Quartet in F Minor for the jury and the audience. And here they are about to play it again tonight, just before the judges retire to decide who should receive which final prize in the overall standings.

Earlier today I asked Nicholas Mann, second violin of the Mendelssohn Quartet, if the group had a competition strategy they'd been using this week.

Nicholas Mann: It's hard to answer. I think the only way we have is possibly in deciding pieces -- which to play first and which to keep for the last. And as we're learning our strategies are not always what we think they should be. I mean, we decided to start with our best, or one of our best foot forward, but from then on it was really a question of leaving good stuff for the end or good stuff for the beginning. You can't outguess a competition.

Alexander: Of course I guess the strategy here is that since there are two works from each period that you offer to play -- what would you do then, pick a weaker one first so that the judges would be left having to ask you for your strongest?

Nicholas Mann: I really can't answer that. You know, I suppose last impressions always somehow have a bigger impact but as it was the last piece we just played was maybe our least comfortable piece. So, of course you can't save all your best stuff for the end because you maybe thrown out in the first round so that doesn't leave you much either.

Alexander: How do you feel about having Beethoven Opus 95 for tonight?

Nicholas Mann: It's fine. It's an exciting piece and I think we can play it quite well.

Alexander: Nicholas Mann, second violin of the Mendelssohn Quartet. And they're our last finalists in this last round of the Banff International String Quartet Competition. We're awaiting they're arrival on stage right now.

Alexander: By the way Nick told me earlier today as well, some of his friends in the United States have been hearing the quartets performances this week on National Public Radio. Maybe I should just take a moment to greet all of our American listeners who are joining the CBC Stereo audience for this Banff competition. Here come the Mendelssohn Quartet.

(clapping)

Alexander: This is the sixty-seventh and last performance of this competition. The Mendelssohn to play Beethoven's Quartet in F Minor, Opus 95.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: And a fifth warm reception for a fifth fine performance. The Mendelssohn Quartet have just played Beethoven's Quartet in F Minor, Opus 95. They're the last of our finalists on this last night of the Banff International String Quartet Competition, and here they are back on stage.

(clapping)

Alexander: The Mendelssohn Quartet from New York City. The violinists Laurie Smukler and Nicholas Mann, the violist Ira Weller and the cellist, Marcy Rosen.

(clapping)

Alexander: And the Mendelssohn Quartet epitomising the energetic, hard driving, North American sound at this competition. A sound the audience here in the Eric Harvie Theatre tonight seems to have enjoyed at least in that Beethoven Opus 95.

(clapping)

Alexander: Yes, they're calling the Mendelssohns back on stage once more.

(clapping)

Alexander: Well that is the last of sixty-seven brilliant string quartet performances we've heard over the past week here at the Banff International String Quartet Competition. Played by ten outstanding young quartets from around the world. All of them under thirty-five years of age. The ten who competed this week selected from many more who applied and auditioned. And of the initial ten a week ago only five made it this far to the finals. Now they've all played one last time in front of the audience here in the Eric Harvie Theatre at the Banff Centre and in front of that all important six-member jury panel. Having done that maybe they can relax just a little bit while they await the judges final decision.

Alexander: Of course there is still a great deal of tension and suspense about which of the five quartets will receive which of the five Courvoisier awards, but at least the kids know that now there is nothing more that they can do to affect the outcome. It's in the lap of the gods or should I say in the hands of the judges. Arts National's special weekend coverage of the finals of the Banff International String Quartet Competition will continue right through the jury's announcement and the presentation of the prizes. It's been an almost round the clock job for the judges. They've been listening to more than six hours of string quartet playing every day, taking extensive notes during and after each performance, retiring to their jury room on many occasions to listen to tape playbacks, to confirm or alter impressions that they've had, back to their rooms to further reflect, to get together and discuss. Finally after five days of competition they had to make that first all important and very difficult decision to eliminate three quartets. The next day they eliminated two more so that only five advance to the finals. All five will be in the money but now it's a question of which order the quartets will finally end up in.

So a difficult job, not an enviable one altogether although it does mean you get to listen to a great deal of fine music. Who's been doing it? Well, the six members of the Banff String Quartet Competition jury. Let me just mention them, in alphabetical order is as good a way as any I think.

First of all cellist Ede Banda, from Budapest, Hungary, on the faculty of the Franz Liszt Academy of Music, and since 1953 -- that's what? -- Thirty years ago, a member of the famous Tatrai Quartet.

Next Andrew Dawes, well known to music lovers in this country as the founding first violinist of Canada's flagship Orford String Quartet, a teacher too, at the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto. The Orford String Quartet was formed at another institution not unlike Banff in some respects, the Mount Orford, Quebec, summer Jeunesse Musicales music camp. But Andrew Dawes also has strong ties to Banff. In fact he studied here earlier on and of course returned here since he has become a professional chamber musician, to teach and to coach other young people.

Next on the jury -- I think I heard a little bit of Italian in the background in the hall just now -- it's an appropriate moment to mention the name Piero Farulli from Florence, Italy. For thirty years Mr. Farulli was violist of the famous Quartetto Italiano, and he too is a member of this Banff jury. One of the things that is interesting about the jury by the way, is the fact that they represent such a wide range of quartet backgrounds. Most, if not all of them are present or former members of great international quartets, quartets whose own style, as you will have heard it in concert or on records, covering a wide gamut and so that means that the preferences, and the preconceptions and the standards -- the things that this jury is looking for -- represent that full range of their background.

Alexander: I've mentioned Ede Banda, Andrew Dawes and Piero Farulli, we come next alphabetically on this jury to Raphael Hillyer, founding violist of the Juilliard String Quartet. He spent twenty-three years with the quartet before leaving it in the late 1960's to pursue his career as a soloist and an ensemble player and a teacher. Mr. Hillyer is an experienced member of juries for chamber music and string competitions on the international level, bringing that wealth of experience to this new Banff competition.

From England violinist Emanuel Hurwitz, on the faculty of the Royal Academy of Music. Mr. Hurwitz has been the leader of several ensembles: the Hurwitz String Quartet, the Melos Ensemble, the Aeolian String Quartet, and also for over twenty years concertmaster of the English Chamber Orchestra. I asked Mr. Hurwitz the other day about many of these quartets who divide their time between chamber music and orchestral activities. I wanted to ask him that in particular because it's an experience that he too has had, and he said ultimately if you're going to devote yourself to chamber music and do the very best job you can at it, it has to be a full-time activity. It doesn't pay terribly well, you might prefer the comfort and security of an orchestral desk, but if it's going to be chamber music, it has to be chamber music all the way.

Sixth and last on this eminent jury, the doyen of the jury and of this entire competition, octogenarian cellist, Mischa Schneider. Born in Russia in 1904, he was twenty-five years old in 1929 when he joined his first quartet and twenty-five is about the same age that these young quartets here this week have averaged. You may have heard my conversation with Mischa Schneider last night on Arts National's coverage of the Banff competition. He was saying it's phenomenal, it's wonderful, these young people play so very well. He was extremely impressed. Mischa Schneider, thirty-six years with the Budapest Quartet. They of course moved to the United States in the late 1930's. Since then he's been a great teacher and a great coach and has been very closely associated with the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont.

The front-of-house staff here at the Eric Harvie Theatre of the Banff Centre have called the audience back into the theatre during this hiatus while the judges completed their deliberations and the cheques were typed and the dignitaries were gathered. Some of the audience had left the hall and wandered around in the lobby, but they're all back in there now because we're told that imminently the announcements will be made. The six jury members will arrive on stage, the dignitaries for the awards ceremony, led by Dr. Paul Fleck, president of the Banff Centre, who will chair this award ceremony. I'm told that backstage right now a very proud Michael Vann, the bow-maker who has made the matched set of bows which will be presented to the winning quartet, is showing those bows to Gilles LeFebvre from the Canada Council.

And we've now just received word that the jury has left their jury room, the checks have been typed, the five final quartets, the five finalists we heard tonight, are all backstage and waiting in the wings. The jury is making its way to the entrance to the stage, and we're awaiting a very exciting moment for all of us who have been part of this Banff International String Quartet Competition all week long.

(clapping)

Alexander: That applause greets the arrival of the jury and the dignitaries.

Dr. Paul Fleck: Welcome ladies and gentlemen to this final event of the competition. I have a lump in my throat both from the magnificence of the music we've been listening to and also in anticipation of the announcement. I received very explicit instructions from Ken Murphy who told me to be brief. He told me that perhaps because he knew I had a modest propensity to long windedness or he knew that you would want to know the results of the competition. I will certainly try to be brief.

This competition is one of a series of events celebrating 50 years of The Banff School of Fine Arts. The first of these events was the publication in October of a book by David and Peggy Leighton called "Artists, Builders and Dreamers - 50 Years at the Banff School", and I'll keep my speech short if you will all promise to read the book. (laughing and clapping in the background) I guess properly to set the stage for you tonight, is to tell you that story.

Let me just focus for a moment on the title, "Artists, Builders and Dreamer" and say that one of Banff's unique features is that its artists and its builders have all been dreamers of the most imaginative stand and have worked together to build an institution which has made tonight possible. It has not been easy, it has not always been described by others as prudent. One of the most marvelous of William Blake's aphorisms is, "Prudence is a rich, ugly, old maid courted by incapacity". It was not prudence which led Ned Corbett to begin. It was not prudence which led Donald Cameron to continue, and it was not prudence which led David Leighton to transform a School of Fine Arts into an advanced conservatory of the arts. It was vision and it was dedication. The Banff International String Quartet Competition is being held at the Banff Centre because the Banff Centre is where it must and should be held, because the music programs at Banff have achieved a level of excellence that makes a competition of this kind natural and necessary.

Since I had absolutely nothing to do with it, I have the colossal cheek to blow our horn loudly in this way, but Ken I promise not to do it for long. I do want however, to mention and to recognize a few of the people who have helped to create the Centre that makes this so. Within the school itself, the commitment, wisdom and administrative savvy of Neil Armstrong over the formative years has been an essential ingredient. The dedication to musical excellence and the caring on every level, professional and human, of Tom Rolston and of Isobel, have been mainstays, and the elfin energy, determination and the attentiveness to every detail of Ken Murphy, have brought us to this night. Would those people please stand and accept our appreciation.

(clapping)

Dr. Paul Fleck: There are so many here tonight who have played a part that I can't possibly cite them all. But there are two who are the quintessential artist-dreamer and builder-dreamer. The success of music here is due to the calibre of faculty and participants. The faculty is an international Who's Who in music of today, just as the participants are an international Who's Who of the music of tomorrow. Of all the faculty, there is one here who symbolizes the standards of excellence and commitment towards which Banff has striven and will continue to strive. He is a marvel whom musicians have come from everywhere to see. He is artist, violinist, performer, genius-in-residence par excellence -- Zoltan Szekely.

(clapping)

Dr. Paul Fleck: There is only one other from the Banff family I wish to cite or I have time to cite, I should say. Of him it can quite simply be said that he is the quintessential builder, dreamer or even more simply it would not have happened had he and Peggy not devoted twelve years of their lives to ensuring that it did happen. It is a pleasure and an honour to all of us that they are here to share in the flowering of the sensitive and sturdy plant they have nurtured with such care and commitment -- David and Peggy Leighton.

(clapping)

Dr. Paul Fleck: From family to friends and neighbours: Two good friends have been the Government of Canada and the Province of Alberta. We have received regrets from Dick Johnson, the Minister of Advanced Education, and from Francis Fox, the Minister of Communications. They represent ministries who have generously supported this competition, and of course the Province of Alberta has throughout our history been a major element in the building process. I'm pleased that Bob Cook, the Director of Performing Arts for Alberta Culture, is here on behalf of the province tonight -- Bob.

(clapping)

Dr. Paul Fleck: I want to say just a brief word about the media on two scores. First of all, we are grateful for the attention this competition has deservedly received. We are also grateful for the civility with which that attention has been lavished on the competition. This is a difficult and delicate time for the competitors through the course of a week, and I think the media have respected that in every way. We are especially grateful to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which has been broadcasting two hours of this magnificent music every night for six nights and sharing with those of us here in the mountains, right across the country, this glorious experience. Many, many thanks to them. Before we turn to the awards so generously provided by Courvoisier I want to welcome Caroline Prolowski, the Marketing Manager of Corby's, who has come from Montreal for the competition, and Cliff Hisliff, Sales Director for Corby's in Western Canada, who has come from Vancouver. I think they're both in the audience, would you stand please?

(clapping)

Dr. Paul Fleck: And finally (Ken, I'm almost done) I want to introduce to you a very special guest, the Viscounte Guy de la Celle, who has come all the way from France, who is the director of Public Affairs and the Vice President for Courviosier, and who is here this evening to present the awards -- M. de la Celle.

(clapping)

Dr. Paul Fleck: Now the envelope. At this point somebody from Clarkson and Gordon or Coopers and Lybrand, or right behind me. The first award to be presented is the award for the best performance of the imposed piece, which is the Harry Somers Quartet played on Thursday, this week. This is a work which was made possible by the generosity of the Canada Council and we have representative from the Council here tonight, M. Gilles Lefebvre, I'm going to ask him if he will say a word about the commission -- Gilles.

Gilles Lefebvre: Mes chers amis, ladies and gentlemen, C'est un grand plaisir pour moi d'être à Banff. It gives me great pleasure to thank the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts for giving the Canada Council the opportunity to subsidize the commissioning of the imposed work for this important international competition. Ten quartets have enriched their repertoire and skill by learning and performing this work. This represents one of the most challenging tests of any given competition. One quartet has been selected by a jury of exceptional competence, the quartet that performed best the Harry Somers work, "Movement for String Quartet". Let us all share the pride of the quartet that has merited such an honor. Thank you.

(clapping)

Alexander: Gilles Lefebvre from the Canada Council. And now the award for the Somers.

Dr. Paul Fleck: And the winner is the Lydian Quartet.

(clapping)

Alexander: And the Lydian Quartet are on stage to receive their cheque. Wilma Smith, Judith Eissenberg, Mary Ruth Ray and Rhonda Rider. To them, \$500 for the best performance of the imposed piece at this competition.

Dr. Paul Fleck: The winner of the Fifth Prize, \$1,500, is the Eder Quartet.

(clapping)

Alexander: From Hungary, the Eder Quartet has taken Fifth place in this Banff International String Quartet Competition. Pal Eder, his wife Erika Toth, Zoltan Toth and Gyorgy Eder, and they are on stage now, Guy de la Celle presenting them with individual cheques totaling \$1,500 for their Fifth-place finish at the Banff competition.

Dr. Paul Fleck: The winner of the Fourth Prize, \$3,000, is the Mendelssohn Quartet.

(clapping)

Alexander: And the Mendelssohn Quartet comes forward to receive their Fourth place prize at the Banff competition. And they've made some friends in Canada and at Banff this week as you can hear. The Mendelssohn Quartet from New York -- Laurie Smukler, Nicholas Mann, Ira Weller, and Marcy Rosen -- brash, energetic, driving.

(clapping)

Dr. Paul Fleck: The winner of the Third Prize, \$5000, is the Lydian Quartet.

(clapping)

Alexander: The Lydians from Brandeis University, Boston, one of the two all woman quartets in this competition and in the finals: Wilma Smith, Judith Eissenberg, Mary Ruth Ray, Rhonda Rider.

(clapping)

Alexander: You can feel the excitement as we can, Third Prize from Banff.

Dr. Paul Fleck: The winner of the Second Prize, \$8,000, is the Hagen Quartet.

(clapping)

Alexander: They're the teenagers from Salzburg, Austria.

(clapping)

Alexander: And they've taken second prize, the Hagen Quartet from Austria, but the audience as you can hear loves them -- they're standing for them.

(clapping)

Alexander: These kids are great, they have a long way to go, second prize is a wonderful place to be at their age. And now ...

Dr. Paul Fleck: And for those of you who have not been paying close attention, (laughing in the background), the winner of the First Prize, \$12,000, and a quartet of matched bows, commissioned from Michael Vann, is the Colorado Quartet.

(clapping)

Alexander: The audience is applauding and cheering, the jury is applauding, for Julie Rosenfeld, first violin, Deborah Redding, second violin, Francesca Martin, viola, Sharon Prater, cello -- The Colorado Quartet.

Alexander: First Prize winners of the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

Alexander: They've received their cheques for \$3,000 each, \$12,000 in all. Michael Vann is handing them their new matched set of bows. The Colorado Quartet has won.

Dr. Paul Fleck: Monsieur de la Celle is going to say three words. They will all be elegant.

Guy de la Celle: I will say only three because I know only three. Bonsoir, Bravo, et à bientôt. No, seriously Courvoisier is very very proud tonight to be associated with this event. And personally I am very very happy because I am very feministe! I can add, it's a really great wedding, this sponsoring of such an event because I know music takes part completely of the life, and really we can say Couvoisier takes part of a certain style of life. Thank you.

Dr. Paul Fleck: Ladies and Gentlemen we have had for the week a distinguished jury, a wonderful and sensitive jury. A jury which represents a good deal of the history of stringed music in this century, and it's been a great pleasure and a great honour for us to have them. Raphael Hillyer is going to say a few words on behalf of the jury.

Raphael Hillyer: Mr. Fleck and my colleagues on the jury, the dear young artists who played so wonderfully, and friends:

We've had a glorious time the last few days. We've heard ten quartets, we've listened morning, noon and night to perhaps 40 masterpieces of the string quartet literature, and spent perhaps 42 hours doing this, and we loved every minute of it. You might ask us, "Isn't that a bit too much?" But I would say, "For passionate string quartet players like ourselves there's never enough". I would like to thank the Banff Centre of the Arts for their great hospitality to us during these last few days, and also to congratulate a number of people and to thank them also for the magnificent organization of this international competition, which I think is the finest of its kind anywhere. Particularly I'd like to mention Ken Murphy and his associates who put this together, I'd also like to mention Tom Rolston, Professor Szekely and Professor Fenyves who played a very large role in the initial stages. I'd like to turn my eyes and my heart towards these marvellous young artists who've played tonight and also, "in absentia", to those who have not played tonight. It has been a very moving experience for us to hear such incredibly wonderful playing at such a high level from everyone. It really almost brings tears to my eyes, because it goes back for me many years to the time when I was about the same age, starting out in the same way. I think I know how they feel. We are very moved and taken not only with your beautiful playing, but with the utterly dedicated way you have approached the highest ideals of music-making. And I think the best thing we could say is best wishes to you for the future, which is bound to be a very shining one for you, and when you leave Banff and go beyond those mountains and into those concert halls out there you will be joining the ranks, we are sure, of the greatest quartets in the world. Thank you.

(clapping)

Alexander: Raphael Hillyer speaking on behalf of the jury at this Banff International String Quartet Competition.

Dr. Paul Fleck: Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you now to join us all for a reception in the west foyer hosted by Courvoisier. Thank you very much for coming and we will see you later.

(clapping)

Alexander: Dr. Paul Fleck, President of the Banff Centre, has concluded the official ceremony, the awards ceremony, here at this first Banff International String Quartet Competition. Warm feelings on all sides, unanimity that this has been a wonderful competition in terms of organization and of course in terms of music.

Once again recapping for you, the winners of this competition out of the initial field of ten.

Alexander: First of all it was the Lydian Quartet who won the special prize for the best performance of the imposed Harry Somers piece. From Hungary, fifth prize to the Eder Quartet; from the United States fourth prize to the Mendelssohn; from the United States as well, third prize to the Lydian Quartet; from Salzburg, Austria, second prize to the wonderful teenaged Hagen Quartet, who played so well and were so popular here; but first prize, the \$12,000, the bows and the tour, reserved for the four young women of the Colorado Quartet. They came from the University of Colorado where they formed into an ensemble as graduate students. Their talent and their merit was recognize when they were brought to New York to serve as teaching assistants to the renowned Juilliard String Quartet, the same quartet to which Raphael Hillyer, the juror who spoke a little while ago, belonged until 1969, and they have proven themselves again. Just before they came to Banff they won the Naumburg Prize and now here tonight they've won first prize at this first Banff International String Quartet Competition. Our congratulations from Arts National to all ten quartets. The five who won and the five other competing quartets who didn't make it to the finals tonight. They've not been mentioned at this point in the proceedings, let me name them again now - the Vermillion, Da Vinci, Manchester, and Harrington Quartets from the United States and the Brodsky Quartet from England, because they too played very well.

And perhaps I can be permitted just a little bit of editorializing at this final point in the proceedings. It's been an unusual week for Arts National, we've been commenting on and talking to performers in a way that is not our usual wont on this program. Just a final word, a personal word, really, from me, about our two top quartets, the Colorado Quartet and the Hagen Quartet. I think I can speak for most people at Banff when I say that from very early on in the proceedings it was clear that these were the two superior quartets here. I think we can say that both the Colorado Quartet and the Hagen Quartet performed splendidly and that we will be hearing a lot more from both of them in the years to come.

Alexander: The Hagen Quartet, winning the second prize at Banff this week, I think their future is assured if they are able to stay together. Their youth, their attractiveness, their European quality is going to win them many more aficionados. It has already, and they, as I've said before, were certainly the popular favorites here at Banff. But the jury deciding that maturity and growth and a few more years perhaps is what gave the Colorado Quartet the edge.

The Colorado Quartet the winning quartet at Banff this week -- astounding that they've only been together with their present membership for eight months and they've won here at Banff tonight. Just before they came to Banff they learned that they had also won this year's Naumburg prize. Either of those awards would be significant, to say the least, for a young quartet. To win them both in such a short space of time is going to change their lives, change the lives of the Colorado Quartet's four young woman members -- Julie Rosenfeld, Deborah Redding, Francesca Martin and Sharon Prater.

I think it's significant, and I haven't mentioned it before, that one of the parts of the first prize at Banff is that the winning quartet has the opportunity to return here to the Banff Centre for a full session, sometime in the next year. That will be subsidized and looked after by the Banff Centre. And you know, I think strange as it may seem, that that may turn out to be one of the most important and valuable parts of the first prize. Because if there is anything that the winning quartet, the Colorado Quartet, needs now, having won the Naumburg and the Banff first prizes, they need time to get away from the world -- Banff the perfect place to do that. A chance to get together, to reflect, to work on new repertoire, to think about and plan for what this new stage in their lives is going to be like, now that they are securely launched as a major professional string quartet.

That concludes CBC Stereo's coverage of this first Banff International String Quartet Competition. We've covered it for seven nights now and many people have been responsible for bringing these programs to you from the Banff Centre. I'd like to mention them and thank them.

First of all the team from CBC Calgary, Executive Producer of Radio Arts and Music in Calgary, Duncan McKerchar, who has been sitting in the CBC mobile studio, listening to the music as it's gone into our microphones and onto recording tape and making it sound as good as it has, all the way through this week. Music Producer, Rick Phillips, who has been our driver this week. You must understand that we have produced these programs backstage at Banff and then they have been "ferried", is the only word for it, into Calgary and put onto the network from there and it's Rick Phillips who's taken them through rain and snow and sleet and every other kind of hazard to get them on the air so that you could listen to them and enjoy them. Thanks to you Rick.

Alexander: And also to our technicians this week: Don Pennington who's been in the makeshift production studio that Don himself put together so well here, and Harold Killianski who's been doing the music mix and handling technical things out in the mobile studio. Both of them have offered tremendous support and behaved in an absolutely professional manner under very difficult and extraordinary conditions this week.

From the Banff Centre, first of all Ken Murphy, the Assistant Director of Music here at Banff and the administrator of this competition, the man who spent a couple years of his life organizing it and preparing for this week. Also all of his staff, the runners who have looked after the quartets, the one person who's been assigned full-time to look after Mischa Schneider, the other person who's looked after the rest of the jury. They've all accommodated us most generously, looked after all our needs and of course organized this competition so well.

Also the staff here at the theatre complex here at Banff in particular stage manager Lynn MacDonald, head of sound Sandy Twoes and all of the technical staff and crew, they too have been very patient as we stepped on their toes and got in their way here this week.

Finally our Arts National team who have been out here on location to cover the event. Music Producer Neil Crory. He's listened I think to almost all 67 performances this week. He should get the Harry Somers prize, he heard all ten performances. Studio director Phillip Coulter, who's put in some extraordinary hours gathering the on-location tape and assembling our nightly broadcasts. Thanks very much Phillip, for your long hours and dedication. And our executive producer, Keith Horner, who arranged for this extensive, and I believe unprecedented, coverage of this competition in the first place. I'm speaking for all of those people, my name is Ian Alexander and I now wish you a very pleasant Good Night, from the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(MUSIC)

"Sunday Morning"
CBC - AM
Sunday, May 1, 1983

Russ Patrick: Now, on "Arts World", from Banff -- the battle of the string quartets and ... (etc). "Sunday Morning": a week in the life of the world.

This week in Banff forty fiddlers belonging to ten string quartets played forty hours of music for six judges. It was the first international competition of its kind ever held in North America. It was billed as the battle of the string quartets.

MUSIC

Russ Patrick: This is Russ Patrick at the Banff Centre. The School of Fine Arts here is celebrating its 50th Anniversary. It wanted to publicize the fact, so fancy brochures were sent to music schools and musicians all over the world inviting them to Banff for the International String Quartet Competition. Courvoisier, the cognac people, put up \$30,000. prize money plus specially made bows for the winning quartet. Those bows, made by Michael Vann of Edmonton, cost a total of \$5,000. The man who's running the Banff Competition isn't shy about the mercenary nature of the event.

Ken Murphy: Listen, the Calgary Stampede gives three \$50,000 prizes to the guys who can stay on a horse the longest -- so don't ask silly questions.

Announcer: You're not apologizing for the \$30,000. in prize money?

Ken Murphy: No, I think it should be more!

Announcer: More than one hundred string quartets from all around the world expressed interest in coming to Banff. Twenty sent in application tapes, ten made the final cut. Most quartets are from the States, some are from Europe, none are from Canada. Ken Murphy explains why -

Ken Murphy: Because none of the Canadian quartets who applied were accepted.

Announcer: None of them were good enough.

Ken Murphy: I said none of them were accepted.

MUSIC

Announcer: String quartets are made up of two violinists, a violist and a cellist. The early leader in the Banff competition was the Hagen Quartet from Austria. Their playing of the Kodaly No. 2, Opus 10, last Sunday caught the ears and the high grades of the judges.

MUSIC

Announcer: The six judges at Banff are a Who's Who of the world's great string quartets. They include alumni from the Budapest, Mischa Schneider; the Amadeus, Piero Farulli; the Juilliard, Raphael Hillyer. The judges hear each of the ten Banff Quartets at least five times. They make extensive notes as they listen, they grade each performance out of 100. Raphael Hillyer explains the basis for his judging -

Raphael Hillyer: Yes, it's a very funny thing. People go back to these

Raphael Hillyer con't

very elemental kinds of reactions. They talk about the fact that if it makes your hair stand on end or if it gives you goose bumps, then it's a great performance. We study for twenty-five years and then it comes down to goose bumps!

MUSIC

Announcer: The string quartet form has been around for two-hundred years, since Haydn invented it in Vienna. But it's never been a really popular musical form. Raphael Hillyer, judge and former member of the great Juilliard Quartet has a theory for the medium's lack of popularity.

Raphael Hillyer: Great works of art never become popular. If they became popular I think they'd lose, there would be something lost. I'm an elitist and I don't believe that this great art is for everybody. I think you have to have a certain kind of experience to grasp the more subtle things. There's no spectacle in chamber music. Opera is a spectacle, orchestra is a kind of spectacle with a super-star conductor usually. People who are not too -- shall we say "tutored" -- will respond to these external aspects. But in a quartet there's nothing except the music. That's all there is.

Russ Patrick: Good Morning, I'm Russ Patrick.

Contestant: Hi.

Russ Patrick: I'm just wondering what this music sound is doing coming from here at 8:00 in the morning?

Contestant: Well, we're playing around 11:00, so I'm just warming up.

Russ Patrick: What time did you quit practicing last night?

Contestant: Oh, we stopped rehearsing about quarter to ten.

Russ Patrick: So this is a fourteen, fifteen-hour day for you, playing.

Contestant: Oh, absolutely, but you work all year for it, so you know you really can't let the energy up in a week like this. It demands a lot of involvement.

Russ Patrick: Thank you.

MUSIC

Announcer: In Banff this week the players practised playing sometimes ten hours a day. By yesterday many of the violin and viola players had dark, ugly bruises under their jaw where they hold their instruments. Quartet players speak of their music and of their playing in religious terms. Some are addicted to their musical habit. The Vermillion Quartet, lunch, Wednesday -

Contestant I: I can just say it's in my blood, I have to do it. It's like eating and drinking and sleeping. I have to play quartets.

Contestant II: I think the greatest music ever written is for string quartet.

Announcer: Do you ever have the feeling before you play a performance, whether it's here or somewhere else, that this is going to be fantastic today?

Contestant I: All the time. You have to think very positively. For me, like we're playing a piece tonight that's got a big viola solo in it and I just know that when I come to that it's going to be the best I've ever played it.

MUSIC (Somers: "Movement for String Quartet")

Announcer: One thing united all forty competitors at Banff: they all hated the so-called "imposed" work, a string quartet specially composed for the occasion by Canadian Harry Somers. The judges had to hear it played ten times on Thursday. Harry Somers was supposed to come to the competition but he didn't show up. On a blackboard in a rehearsal room someone had scribbled "Wanted: Harry Somers, Dead or Alive - Reward \$500." This was some of the lunchroom conversation. The Vermillions were talking to the DaVinci's -

Contestant I: First when we looked at it, I hate to say that we thought there were no musical ideas in the whole piece. We thought basically it was a math problem and we thought basically that it was a piece that was designed specifically to trip up as many quartets as possible.

Contestant II: We got out a calculator to figure out some of the parts to find out who had to play a figure first because basically it's an exercise in not being together.

Announcer: What would you say to Mr. Somers if he was sitting at this table?

Contestant I: I think I wouldn't be sitting at this table with him.

MUSIC

Announcer: Anton Dvorak's string quartet was written a hundred years before Harry Somers' string quartet. The judges liked very much the way the Colorado Quartet played it. The Coloradans are veteran string competition players, but they still don't feel comfortable playing for judges. Julie Rosenfeld and Debbie Redding -

Julie Rosenfeld: We're taught to enjoy the music, to have a good time to play so that people really love the music. And here we are up in Banff, we're sitting on the stage and there are six little judges out in the audience and they're not thinking "Oh, that was just wonderful, gorgeous", they're thinking "that was out of tune, that wasn't together" -- you know, all that.

Announcer: Why do you play quartets? You know you could make a lot more money and presumably a more firmly established career playing in an orchestra or pursuing a solo career. Why go the quartet route?

Debbie Redding: Well I do it 'cause I love it. I mean I love it to death, even, even when it's incredibly hard work, and even when I hate it I still love it. It's a chance to be a combination of a soloist and an accompanist and a conductor. You do everything, you know, it's a multiple role, playing in a quartet.

Julie Rosenfeld: Sure there is one Beethoven violin concerto but there are sixteen Beethoven quartets and to be able to play that great music time and time again! ...

Debbie Redding: Maybe you could say that the string quartet music is sort of minimalist, it's "the most in the least", you know. It brought to mind that the Webern that we're playing tomorrow night, which of course is the Viennese school -- it's like less is more.

Announcer: I don't want to shock you but I think you're playing that Webern tonight.

Debbie Redding: Oh, it's tonight! I have to go practice. (laughing)

MUSIC

Announcer: After seven days of music making, playing Webern, Haydn, Dvorak and Somers, the four women of the Colorado Quartet won the Banff International String Quartet Competition last night. Each of the women gets three thousand dollars Canadian, a new bow and an already-arranged tour of Canada and the United States. It starts Tuesday at the Guelph Spring Festival in Ontario. They'll actually have time to do something other than eat, sleep fitfully and make music, which the forty contestants did here all this week. For Sunday Morning, I'm Russ Patrick at the Banff Centre.

Announcer: The final round of the Banff String Quartet Competition will be broadcast tonight on the CBC Stereo Network at 9:05, 9:35 in Newfoundland.

MUSIC

ARTS NATIONAL

NOV. 3/83

Previously unbroadcast material
from competition. Performances
by Mendelssohn, Lydian, Hagen and
Colorado quartets.

Arts National
Thursday, November 3, 1983

Alexander: Good evening, and welcome to Arts National: CBC Stereo's weeknight concert hall and music journal of the air.

MUSIC

Alexander: Hello, I'm Ian Alexander. Among the many highlights of Arts National's programming, at least since I joined the show fourteen months or so ago, few if any have been more involving and rewarding to us (and, judging by your letters, to our listeners as well) than our week-long on-location coverage last April of the first-ever Banff International String Quartet Competition. Held in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Banff Centre at its School of Fine Arts in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta.

For seven days, we were privileged to live with, work alongside, listen to, and broadcast, ten of the world's best young string quartets -- all under age 35 -- as they competed daily, under the intensive scrutiny of a six-member, blue-ribbon jury, for 30 thousand dollars in cash prizes, as well as many other awards and honours.

We felt then that we were seeing and hearing the future of world chamber music ... and that it was a very bright future, indeed.

Back in April, Arts National Broadcast a total of 15 hours of performances from the Banff International String Quartet Competition, including the final playoffs to determine the ranking of the five finalists, on the evening of Saturday, April 30th, and the awards ceremony which followed that concert. But that was the second of two final rounds which these five young prize-winning quartets had played on that single day: an exhausting yet exhilarating climax to a gruelling week which had already seen them perform at least one complete quartet every day for a week, under the special strains of international competition conditions.

Tonight, Arts National is pleased to present previously un-broadcast performances from earlier in that final day of string quartet competition at Banff, by four of the five young quartets who went on to receive prizes later that evening. We've chosen to revisit Banff today in particular, as a kind of preview to a live concert we'll have for you exactly one week tonight, by the grand prize winners at the competition: The Colorado String Quartet, who are currently reaping one of the rewards of their first-place finish: a major Canadian Tour.

That tour begins this Saturday night in Edmonton, and continues on to Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and Kitchener/Waterloo.

We'll hear the Colorado Quartet perform at the end of tonight's broadcast -- and then we'll hear them again in a complete live concert program, one week from tonight, here on Arts National.

But this retrospective visit to the final day of the Banff International String Quartet Competition begins with a performance by the fourth-place finishers in the competition: The brash young Mendelssohn Quartet from New York City.

The quartet was formed in 1979 by graduates of the Juilliard, Cleveland, and Curtis music schools.

Its members are Laurie Smukler and Nicholas Mann, violins (the latter the son of Robert Mann, founding first violin of the Juilliard String Quartet) ... Ira Weller, viola (who's married to violinist Smukler) ... and Marcy Rosen, cello.

We're about to hear them play the first of Haydn's 1781 Quartets, Opus 33, known as the "Russian" Quartets.

(clapping)

Alexander: From the Banff International String Quartet Competition, here is the Mendelssohn String Quartet, to perform the String Quartet in B Minor, Opus 33, No. 1, by Franz Josef Haydn.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: That was Franz Josef Haydn's String Quartet in B Minor, Opus 33, No. 1.

It was played by the young Mendelssohn String Quartet from New York City ... one of the performances that won them fourth place in the field of ten ensembles at the first Banff International String Quartet Competition last April.

(clapping)

Alexander: Still to come: final day performances by the third, second and first place finishers at Banff, playing quartets by Brahms, Mozart, and more Haydn.

(clapping)

Alexander: Arts National tonight is re-visiting a location we got to know well last April: the Margaret Greenham Theatre at the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts, in its splendid Rocky Mountain setting. For a week, we joined six internationally distinguished jurors, forty aspiring young string players, and the public audience, to witness this first major Canadian string quartet competition. From a hundred quartets who enquired about the event, ten were chosen by audition to come to Banff to compete.

Alexander: For five days, all ten played every day for the judges. Then three were eliminated, while the rest advanced to the semi-finals. Two more were eliminated, and the five finalists played twice more in a single day for the judges.

It's the first of those two final rounds we're listening to tonight. And we come next to the quartet which finished third in the overall standings -- and which also won the special jury prize for the best performance of the imposed piece for the competition ... the work each quartet was required to play ... the newly commissioned Movement for String Quartet, by Canadian composer Harry Somers.

The Lydian Quartet was one of two all-female ensembles in the competition -- both of which, incidentally, finished in the top three. This quartet hails from Boston, where they are now in their fourth year as quartet-in-residence at Brandeis University.

This coming spring, they'll make their New York debut in Carnegie Recital Hall, and then embark on a European tour.

I'll bet the Europeans will be suitably impressed with the Lydian Quartet's performances of the great staples from the chamber music literature, as well as their special understanding of more modern works.

The members of the Lydian Quartet are: first violinist Wilma Smith from Fiji, and her three North American-born colleagues: Judith Eissenberg, violin; Mary Ruth Ray, viola; and Rhonda Rider, cello.

We'll hear them now, in their final competition day reading of the first of Johannes Brahms' three extant string quartets ... completed in 1873, but incorporating material going back almost two decades. It's a passionate, brooding work.

(clapping)

Alexander: Here is the Lydian String Quartet, in final round competition from Banff, with the String Quartet in C Minor, Opus 51, No. 1, by Johannes Brahms.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: String Quartet in C Minor, Opus 51, No. 1, by Johannes Brahms, performed by the Lydian String Quartet, in the final round of the first Banff International String Quartet Competition last April.

(clapping)

Alexander: The four young women of the Lydian Quartet went on that same evening to learn that they had won third prize at the Banff Competition, plus the special jury prize for their performance of the Competition's imposed work.

(clapping)

Alexander: On Arts National tonight from CBC Stereo, you're listening to previously un-broadcast performances from the final round of the Banff International String Quartet Competition, which our program covered on location, as it happened, during the last week of April this year.

This first event of its kind, held as part of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Banff Centre, was such a success that it's become a regular fixture; the next competition scheduled to be held in 1986. And I trust you're being reminded by our broadcast tonight, just how high a calibre of playing these young string quartets are capable of turning in on a consistent basis.

First and second places among the top prizewinners at Banff last spring remained something of a tossup right to the end. The group that eventually took second spot in the opinion of the jury, was certainly the popular favorite ... as much for their youthful charm, as for their mature musicianship. The Hagen Quartet from Austria is very much a family affair. Three of its four members are siblings: first violinist Lukas Hagen, his sister Veronika, viola, and their kid brother Clemens, cello. Rounding out the foursome is their classmate from the Salzburg Mozarteum, violinist Annete Bik.

The Hagens learned music at the knee of their father, who is principal violist of the Mozarteum Orchestra.

At the time of the competition last April, their average age was nineteen-and-a-half.

They well deserved the title "Wunderkinder", as their playing day after day at Banff demonstrated -- particularly in the classical Viennese repertoire, of the sort they're about to perform for us.

Incidentally, the Hagen String Quartet will be appearing next summer at the Los Angeles Olympics, and the following season they'll make a North American tour which will include visits to Vancouver and Toronto. But we're fortunate to be able to hear them right now, playing one of Mozart's last three string quartets, known as the "Prussian" Quartets, because they were inspired by a visit the composer made to Potsdam and Berlin in the spring of 1789, and dedicated to the Prussian monarch, King Friedrich Wilhelm, who was a talented amateur cellist, and probably played the cello part at the works' first performances.

(clapping)

Alexander: In final day competition at Banff, Alberta, here is the teen-aged Hagen Quartet from Salzburg, Austria, to perform the String Quartet in B Flat Major, K.589, by Mozart.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: That was Austria's sensational young Hagen Quartet, playing Mozart's String Quartet in B Flat, K.589.

(clapping)

Alexander: Proving that the family that plays together, stays together ... proving, too, that even children still in their teens can make magnificent music, the Hagen Quartet came from sweeping last year's Portsmouth Competition to take second place at the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

(clapping)

Alexander: And I can promise you that we'll all be hearing lot more from the Hagen Quartet in the future. This sense of discovery of the future of chamber music, one of the most exciting aspects of the Banff Competition. And, as you can hear, the Hagens certainly popular in the Banff Centre's Margaret Greenham Theatre, following each of their competition performances, including the one we just heard.

(clapping)

Alexander: Just to give you an idea of the stress and strain of this kind of international competition, one revealing anecdote tells a lot. Late on the Friday night, after each quartet had already played six times, a list was posted of the five ensembles which were advancing to the finals.

Also on the notice was the name of the piece which the jury wanted each finalist quartet to play, starting at 10 the next morning. I don't think any of the twenty young people got much sleep that night. But they all played well, not once, but twice the next day, in the final round of this Banff International String Quartet Competition.

By the end of a long Saturday, fifth place had gone to Hungary's Eder Quartet ... fourth place to America's Mendelssohn Quartet ... third place to America's Lydian Quartet ... second place to Austria's Hagen Quartet .. and the coveted first place (including a cash prize of 12 thousand dollars, a matched set of new instrument bows, and other awards) to the Colorado Quartet. As their name implies, the Colorado Quartet was formed at the University of Colorado, where they served as quartet-in-residence. Subsequently, they went to New York to serve as teaching assistants to the famed Juilliard String Quartet.

Shortly before coming to Banff, they learned that they had also won this past year's Naumburg Award for chamber music. That, coupled with the Banff win, has secured their future. They wisely took the summer off to return to the secluded Banff Centre to consolidate their forces and learn new repertoire, for what is now a busy, full-time touring life for them. This coming weekend, they start a major cross-Canada tour, which will include a visit to Toronto one week from tonight, when their concert will be broadcast live, in its entirety, here on Arts National.

Other important engagements this season include Alice Tully Hall in New York ... the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. ... and, along with the Hagen Quartet, the Los Angeles Olympics next summer.

In all, they'll give some 35 concerts this season, as well as continuing to teach and serve as quartet in residence for the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Symphony.

The Colorado Quartet is, like the Lydian Quartet, composed entirely of young women: Julie Rosenfeld and Deborah Redding, violins; Francesca Martin, viola; and Sharon Prater, cello. And we're about to hear one of their final-round Banff Competition performances which helped to launch them on their professional career. The work in question is one of Franz Josef Haydn's magnificent late Erdody Quartet, Opus 76: the third of the group, known as the "Emperor", with its second movement theme and variations, dedicated to Emperor Franz the Second, now familiar as the Austrian national anthem, and as a hymn tune.

(clapping)

Alexander: Here now is the Colorado String Quartet -- first-place finishers at the Banff Competition, to perform Haydn's String Quartet in C Major, Opus 76, No. 3: the "Emperor" Quartet.

MUSIC

Alexander: Franz Josef Haydn's "Emperor" String Quartet in C Major, Opus 76, No. 3, performed by the Colorado Quartet from the United States: Julie Rosenfeld, Deborah Redding, Francesca Martin and Sharon Prater.

(clapping)

Alexander: The Colorado String Quartet gave that performance early on the morning of Saturday, April 30th, during a final round at the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

Tonight on Arts National, we've been listening to excerpts from the finals of the Banff Competition, performed by four of the prize-winning quartets: The Mendelssohn, Lydian, Hagen and Colorado Quartets.

Alexander: These competition performances were recorded last April, on location at the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts in Alberta, by Music Producers Duncan McKercher and Rick Phillips, with technical operations by Don Pennington and Harold Kilianski. Thanks also to Ken Murphy and the staff at the Banff Centre, for their assistance and hospitality. Arts National's coverage of the Banff International String Quartet Competition was produced by Neil Crory and Philip Coulter, and co-ordinated by our Executive Producer, Keith Horner.

A final reminder that you can hear the Banff grand prize winners, the Colorado String Quartet, in a full-length live concert one week from tonight on Arts National.

In the meantime, watch for them in your area. They perform in Edmonton on Saturday night, Calgary Sunday, Saskatoon Tuesday, and Winnipeg Wednesday.

Next Thursday finds them in Toronto, then it's Montreal next Friday, Ottawa on Sunday the 13th, and Kitchener/Waterloo Monday the 14th. I should also mention that early in the new year, Arts National will repeat five of its programs from Last April's Banff International String Quartet Competition, the week of January 23rd, 1984.

ARTS NATIONAL

NOV. 10/83

Colorado Quartet
"live" from St.
Lawrence Centre
Toronto

COLORADO QUARTET "LIVE"
FROM THE ST. LAWRENCE CENTRE
TORONTO
FRIDAY, Nov.10, 1983

Alexander: Good Evening, welcome to Arts National. I'm Ian Alexander and once again tonight, for the third night in a row this week, we have a live-to-air concert broadcast for you. The Arts National team is on location at the Town Hall of St. Lawrence Centre in Toronto to bring you what promises to be a superlative evening of chamber music, music for string quartet in fact, played by the four young women of the Colorado String Quartet: Julie Rosenfeld and Deborah Redding, violins; Francesca Martin, viola and Sharon Prater, cello.

Following our featured live concert with the Colorado Quartet we'll have the broadcast premiere of a brand new Canadian work composed by Talivaldis Kenins, in honour of the 500th Anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther.

If you're a regular Arts National listener the name of the Colorado String Quartet will not be new to you I think. Particularly if you heard our week-long coverage this past April, direct from the Banff International String Quartet Competition, at The Banff Centre School of Fine Arts in Alberta. There a distinguished international jury judged the Colorado String Quartet to be the best in a field of ten fine young quartets. And they walked away from the competition with the first prize of \$12,000 in cash, a handsome set of matched instrument bows, custom made for them, and numerous other honours and awards.

That important Banff competition win came hot on the heels of the Colorado Quartet's capturing of another major laurel in the world of international chamber music -- this past year's Naumburg award, and together, as you might expect, these two distinctions have gained for the Colorado Quartet immediate, intense, widespread attention from critics and audiences alike. One of the opportunities which came their way as a result of the Banff win was a cross-Canada tour and that tour is presently under way. The Colorado Quartet's jam-packed itinerary began this past weekend with concerts in Edmonton and Calgary. They moved on to Saskatoon and Winnipeg earlier this week. In fact the quartet just flew in from Winnipeg on the breakfast flight this morning. After their Toronto appearance tonight, the one we're broadcasting live to you, the Colorado Quartet will go on to Montreal tomorrow night, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa Sunday afternoon, and the tour winds up Monday in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario. I hope you'll catch them in person if they're in your vicinity in the next few days, but if not the next best thing is to stay tuned for the next couple of hours as we prepare to hear the Colorado Quartet live in concert playing string quartets of Beethoven, Webern, Schubert and Benjamin Britten.

The Coloradans are a young quartet. All four members in their late twenties or early thirties. Two of them hail from the state of Colorado, the other two from Los Angeles, California. They came together just a few years ago as graduate quartet-in-residence at the University of Colorado and that's how they got their name.

Alexander: But these days the quartet is based in New York City where two of its members are teaching assistants at the Juilliard School of Music and the entire quartet continues to coach with the famed Juilliard String Quartet, and in particular with its founding leader Robert Mann.

Tonight's program by the Colorado String Quartet, coming to you live on Arts National from Town Hall in Toronto, is about to open with an early string quartet by Ludwig van Beethoven. That will be followed by Anton Webern's five miniature Movements For String Quartet then an intermission, following which we'll hear the Quartettsatz or "quartet" movement by Franz Schubert, followed by the String Quartet No. 2, in C Major, by Benjamin Britten. Incidentally both the Webern and Britten works were among the 20th-century competition performances which helped the Coloradans take first place at the Banff competition last spring.

You know, one of the reasons that we at Arts National so much enjoyed our week of broadcast coverage from the Banff International String Quartet Competition was that we realized we were hearing there the shape of things to come in chamber music as performed by the best practitioners of that art among the current younger generation, and, as you are about to hear, the Colorado Quartet represent the very cream of that prestigious crop.

Beethoven's first excursion into the string quartet genre, in which he was later to write some of his greatest music, came when he was approaching his thirtieth year. That was at the very end of the 18th century. He was probably urged to try his hand at this form by his friend and patron Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowitz, to whom the six quartets comprising Opus 18 are dedicated. Lobkowitz maintained an excellent string quartet in his own household in Vienna and the members of that quartet often joined Beethoven at the piano for evenings of chamber music.

The third quartet of Opus 18, the one you're about to hear, is in the key of D Major. It begins with a mellow and contemplative first movement, moving through a deceptively simple andante and allegro, and ending with a fine display of the composer's youthful high spirits. I recall at Banff last April that we heard the Colorado Quartet play another of Beethoven's quartets from this same Opus 18, but not the number 3, so I'm certainly looking forward to hearing this particular quartet tonight.

I was telling you about the Colorado String Quartet coming from the University of Colorado to New York where they became associated with the Juilliard String Quartet, who teaches them, and to whom in turn they serve as teaching assistants. These days the Colorado String Quartet is also serving as quartet-in-residence for the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra. But this season much of their time is spent acquiring new repertoire and giving performances in North America -- Canada and the United States, like the one which is about to begin tonight, as we welcome Julie Rosenfeld and Deborah Redding, violins, Francesca Martin, viola and Sharon Prater, cello -- the Colorado String Quartet, resplendent in full-length burgundy taffeta skirts and white

Alexander: blouses, and their program about to open with the String Quartet in D Major, Opus 18, No. 3 by Ludwig van Beethoven. The prizewinning Colorado String Quartet live in concert tonight on Arts National.

MUSIC

Alexander: String Quartet in D Major, Opus 18, No. 3, by Beethoven performed live in concert by the young Colorado String Quartet from the United States. And a full house on hand tonight here at Town Hall to hear this much talked about prizewinning quartet who are returning to the stage.

(clapping)

Alexander: Julie Rosenfeld and Deborah Redding, violinists, Francesca Martin, viola and Sharon Prater, cello -- the Colorado String Quartet. And I wouldn't be surprised if the Colorado Quartet wants to take a brief break after that performance of the Beethoven, as they prepare themselves to leap forward in time, just over a century or so, for a performance of Anton Webern's Five Movements for String Quartet, Opus 5, composed in 1909. These five string miniatures take a total of just over ten minutes to play. They're typical of the kind of ultra-brief pieces Webern was writing at this point in his career. Each of the five movements makes its musical point with the minimum of resources. As Webern's colleague and mentor, Arnold Schoenberg said, "One has to realize what restraint is required to express oneself with such brevity".

And we are standing by for the Colorado Quartet to return to the stage of Town Hall in Toronto.

I might just mention that the quartet is using tonight one of the prizes that they won at the Banff competition. It's a gorgeous new set of four matched instrument bows which was made for them by Michael Vann, complete with silver and ebony in the handles. We're going to hear more about those handsome and valuable bows during the intermission in tonight's concert when I have the opportunity to chat with all four members of the Colorado Quartet. But right now we're about to hear them perform once again.

(clapping)

Alexander: Returning to the stage of Town Hall in Toronto, here again the Colorado String Quartet. And they're about to perform the Five Movements for String Quartet, Opus No. 5, by Anton Webern, as Arts National's live broadcast tonight with the Colorado String Quartet continues.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: Five Movements for String Quartet, Opus 5, by Anton Webern, performed by the Colorado String Quartet. Some difficult and unusual performance practices called for there, brought off with apparent ease. And here is the Colorado Quartet back on stage. Energy and musical understanding and unanimity of ensemble, those are the kind of qualities which the critics are praising these days in performances by the Colorado String Quartet.

Well we've reached the midway point in tonight's live to air concert broadcast on Arts National. It's coming to you direct from the Town Hall of St. Lawrence Centre in Toronto, where the Colorado String Quartet, recent winners of the Banff International String Quartet Competition and America's Naumburg Award are demonstrating the kind of world class chamber music performances that have won them those awards and catapulted these four young American women into the international limelight. After intermission the Colorado String Quartet will return to perform the Quartettsatz in C Minor by Franz Schubert and Benjamin Britten's String Quartet No. 2 in C Major, composed in tribute to Henry Purcell.

During the intermission, in just a moment or two, we are going to meet the members of the quartet; let me name them for you once again: first violinist Julie Rosenfeld, an alumna of the University of Southern California, of Yale University and of the Curtis Institute of Music; second violinist Deborah Redding, who holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado and a master's from Juilliard; violist Francesca Martin, a graduate of the California Institute of the Arts, she's also spent several summers studying at the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts, and cellist Sharon Prater, whose academic background also includes the University of Colorado and the Juilliard School of Music.

Now this week as I mentioned the Colorado String Quartet is on a whirlwind Canadian tour that includes, if I count correctly, no less than eight concerts in eleven days. Last night they performed in Winnipeg under the auspices of the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, and well before the sun came up this morning they were on their way to the Winnipeg airport to fly to Toronto for tonight's concert, so it's a hectic schedule indeed.

Earlier today I dropped by Town Hall to eavesdrop on the Colorado Quartet's rehearsal for this evening's performance and they very kindly let me join them on stage where we had some conversation, and we recorded that conversation to share with you during this intermission. So stand by to hear the Colorado Quartet with some informal rehearsal--music and discussion, as Arts National continues.

MUSIC

Alexander: That's the Colorado Quartet in rehearsal about six and a half hours before tonight's concert began and only a few hours after they flew in from Winnipeg. This is cross-Canada week for you all. You started where? Edmonton on the weekend?

All: Yes.

Alexander: And where have you been since then?

All (together): Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg

Alexander: And 7 a.m. this morning on the plane to Toronto.

Sharon Prater: That's right.

Alexander: Is this a kind of schedule you've been exposed to before, much?

Francesca Martin: No, never. This is our first, so it's is an experience for us, learning how to cope with travelling, exhaustion and lots of performing.

Alexander: How are you finding it's best to cope with it? Are you having to get strict with the people who are putting on the concerts saying, "Now we're going to rest".

Francesca Martin: A little bit. Just in dealing sometimes with post-concert receptions. We all love to eat and have a good time after our concerts just as much as the next guy, but we finally have to learn to get back to the hotel and get in to bed. It's a difficult thing to do after concerts because there is usually a high that one has.

Alexander: We got to know the Colorado Quartet very well of course, in April at Banff, where they won the Banff International String Quartet Competition, having just won the Naumburg Award. This has changed your lives, yes? In what ways?

Let's go around and start with Julie Rosenfeld.

Julie Rosenfeld: Of course it has completely changed what the quartet has been doing just because suddenly we've been thrust into a professional quartet situation. Before we were doing some concerts, but we were mostly studying and still honing our skills. And we still do -- we're coaching with Robert Mann, still at the Juilliard School, and things that are very important to our growth as a group. But all of a sudden we have concerts to play, important concerts to play, and far more than we ever had before, so it's brand new thing for the group itself.

Alexander: Deborah Redding, what's it doing in terms of your own work on existing, and especially new repertoire? You're a lot busier concertizing now.

Deborah Redding: We certainly are and of course a very high priority for us is to establish a large working repertoire, being at this point only a year old, as the quartet is. We have a limited repertoire and it's a very urgent priority for us to expand and get more so we're trying to maintain pieces at a performance pitch that we can go out on any stage and feel comfortable performing and at the same time trying to learn new pieces all the time which may not be not quite as comfortable, and to balance that is difficult, and it takes time to learn how to do that too.

Alexander: You went back to Banff -- I should address this question to Francesca, because you have the most Banff experience -- and I guess after the competition win, you decided that -- I mean a term at Banff was part of that win -- you obviously decided that it would be a good place to get away and work on repertoire. Was that the purpose?

Francesca Martin: Yes. We felt that it would be a nice, secluded place where we could do nothing but rehearse, and as we said we needed to learn new repertoire and we find when we're in the city, especially in New York, there are many distractions. We have to work to earn a living doing other things, so we felt it would be the most ideal situation. And there were some people up there that we wanted to work with, play for and get new ideas.

Alexander: And did it turn out to be what you'd hoped it would be?

Francesca Martin: Yes it did.

Alexander: That's Francesca Martin, violist. We're coming around to Sharon Prater the cellist, and let me put a different angle on this whole issue to you Sharon. Has it made a big difference to your life from a financial, material point of view? Are you a professional now?

Sharon Prater: That's a very tricky question. We are, I guess you could say, that most people would immediately think that all of a sudden we are professionals, though we have been, I guess you could say "in training" and in that kind of shadowy borderline field where you are not really a student but you're kind of a half-time professional. Yes, we're very much more a professional performing group this year. We have about 35 concerts, which is far more than we've ever had before. I would say financially we are (since you put the question to me) we are just beginning to actually support ourselves as a quartet.

Alexander: That was the reason I asked the question, that was the point of the question. Because you spent a long time working and not doing that, I'm sure.

Sharon Prater: We did, which for any quartet is extremely frustrating and draining because the amount of time and effort and dedication that goes into being a string quartet is so high that it really is very difficult to do anything else. And one of those things that we had to do, constantly, before this year so much, was to support ourselves mainly through other playing jobs, which fortunately we don't have to do nearly so much this year.

Alexander: However you are continuing to hold down other responsibilities, some of you at least, are still teaching at Juilliard. Am I right about that?

Julie Rosenfeld:

Sharon Prater: [<] Francesca and I still are and we are also still in residence with a symphony in Pennsylvania as well.

Alexander: And I know for instance Julie, that you have been pursuing a solo career. Is that something you're going to be able to continue to do?

Julie Rosenfeld: Well, and I realize that I'm not going to be Itzhak Perlman, that's definitely out of the question. But my work with the quartet is extremely time consuming and I love it very much but, as a musician, and as just a person sometimes it's really good to do other things, get away, and also continuing to play solo work really helps my skills as far as maintaining a level for first violin, which is for me extremely important.

Alexander: I'm kind of interested in that a New York based American string quartet signed with a Canadian agent. That's kind of unusual. How did that come about?

Deborah Redding: Well we met Peter Sever because he had engaged whatever quartet was to win the competition. He'd booked several concerts in America for that quartet and then when he found out who we were and he met us, he liked us and he offered us a contract. And it just so happened that when we got back to New York, after winning the Naumburg and winning the Banff competition and making a successful New York debut we actually had offers from more than half a dozen New York managements -- offers of contracts. And we were able at that point to make a choice, which is a nice position to be in. And Peter Sever of GAMI was our choice as a manager who seemed to be interested in us personally as artists and in our career as young artists and to have our best interests at heart, personally and economically and musically.

Alexander: What are you looking for from him at this point? I mean, you are young and growing, what kinds of things can he do in particular? You say he seemed to have an understanding of you as a young string quartet. What do you mean by that?

Sharon Prater: Well I would say one of our main concerns is not doing too much too soon. Which is exactly the opinion that he has. We were all very concerned about using our energies in a very economical way. That is, presenting ourselves in as many places as we could that would further our career the most without taxing us too much either musically or physically. Because we do of course have a lot of repertoire still to learn, we have a lot of musical growth to do and the thing we didn't want to do was over-extend ourselves in either way. So, Peter Sever and his company really seemed to be tuned in to that very important aspect.

Alexander: Let me put a kind of unusual question that crossed my mind this morning. You're being presented as winners of the Banff International String Quartet Competition, winners of the Naumburg Award. Next year there will be another Naumburg winner, a couple of years from now there will be another Banff winner. Does this mean that you have this narrow window time to establish your credentials so that you can just be the Colorado Quartet with no asterisk, footnote. Do you see what I'm saying Francesca?

Francesca Martin: Yes I do. This is the year that we are able to do all these concerts because of these awards. We feel that this year is very important in that we have to prove ourselves as a quartet so that the next year and the next year and the next year we are booked because of our reputation as performers, not necessarily as competition winners.

Alexander: What about competitions? You've had some experience at them now, there are others that you might want to attend. Are you through with competitions?

Sharon Prater: Thank God we don't have to do anymore!! (Laughing)

Alexander: That's the group consensus, is it?

All Together: Absolutely. No more.

Alexander: You have some interesting engagements coming up. You're going to be in Los Angeles next June? Is that right?

Francesca Martin: Yes.

Alexander: And you're going back to the Guelph Spring Festival next year for a quite interesting encounter I think. Who would like to tell everybody about that one?

Julie Rosenfeld: Well it's an all-Mendelssohn program, where we are going to do the F Minor Quartet. The Orford String Quartet with Francie, are going to do the B Flat Quintet and then after intermission we are going to join forces and do the Mendelssohn Octet.

Alexander: It sounds wonderful. And particularly interesting because Andy Dawes, first violinist of the Orford, was one of your judges at Banff.

All: Yes, that's right.

Alexander: Those are a couple of things I know about. What don't I know about? What else is coming up on your itinerary that you are particularly looking forward to?

Sharon Prater: Well we're actually doing the Mendelssohn again on the L.A. Concert series with the Sequoia Quartet, which we're really looking forward to. Of course, we have some concerts at the Library of Congress in the spring and our Alice Tully Hall Naumburg Award concert in the beginning of May, on which we're doing a piece that was commissioned by the Naumburg for us as a part of the prize by Ezra Laderman. So we're very excited about premiering that work.

Alexander: How about overseas? Any plans in that regard at this stage?

Sharon Prater: Not so far.

Alexander: You're waiting for calls.

All: Absolutely. We're waiting anxiously by the telephone!

Alexander: The four of you are spending even more time together these days, and you're on the road together, as opposed to previously. Are you still all getting along fairly well?.

Julie Rosenfeld: Fairly well, yes.

Alexander: Finding out more about yourselves though, and the interaction of the four of you?

Sharon Prater: Oh, all the time. I think that the pressure of the concerts and the tour really is a very enlightening thing for us as individuals and as a group.

Alexander: There's something that people have heard but can't see -- our listening audience tonight -- that I'd like you to describe and that's the bows. And I should remind people that there were a lot of awards that went with winning the Banff Competition -- cash, time at Banff, this tour, and a matched set of four very handsome instrument bows. And I must say I've never seen them up close. I saw them presented to you. But Julie, you're holding one up. Could you describe it for me at the same time.

Julie Rosenfeld: Well, it's a bow made by Michael Vann of Edmonton who is, I guess, one of Canada's leading bow makers. It is a bow with an octagonal stick and a frog imprinted with the logo of Courvoisier Napoleon, the reason for that being that Courvoisier donated the prize money and the money and the money to pay Michael Vann to make the bows for the Banff competition. People are always looking at our bows and saying, "Gee, that looks like a silhouette of Napoleon on your bow!"

Alexander: And it is!

Julie Rosenfeld: ... it is!

Alexander: Are they sitting well in your hands? Are you happy with the bows?

All: Very happy.

Alexander: Maybe you should pick them up and get back to your rehearsal. Julie Rosenfeld, Deborah Redding, Francesca Martin, Sharon Prater -- the Colorado Quartet. We look forward to the second half of the concert.

MUSIC (Rehearsal)

Alexander: Taped earlier today on the stage here at Town Hall in Toronto, the Colorado String Quartet in rehearsal and sharing with us some of their views about their own rapidly accelerating musical career.

Well we're back "live" now, awaiting the end of intermission and the continuation of our broadcast concert by the Colorado String Quartet here on Arts National from CBC Stereo. I'm Ian Alexander and ahead of us, music for string quartet by Franz Schubert and Benjamin Britten. As well, after the concert we have something else rather special for you; that's the world premiere broadcast of the new Partita for Strings by Canadian composer Talivaldis Kenins. This work is based on Lutheran Chorale melodies. It was commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for the 500th Anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther. Luther was born exactly 500 years ago today, so you can't be more timely than that.

Let me tell you about the two works we are going to hear in the second half of the concert. Franz Schubert composed a large number of complete quartets, but he also left us an incomplete quartet, perhaps the chamber music equivalent of his Unfinished Symphony. Not performed until 40 years after his death, the fragment is identified as the Quartettsatz or Quartet Movement in C Minor. It was written in December of 1820 when Schubert was 23 years old and his fortunes were very much in the ascendent. Why the composer never completed the other movements of this quartet remains a mystery. It seems to have been a time in his life when he was particularly self critical and somewhat uncertain of his ability perhaps to sustain his creative gifts right through a complete four-movement work. At any rate, we will hear this single surviving movement as the first music in the second half of tonight's concert by the Colorado Quartet. And immediately after that the quartet will move on to one of the modern classics which they performed so well under the special strains of competition at Banff earlier this year -- a work which they've performed since to great acclaim in many cities across Canada, and that is the String Quartet No. 2, in C Major, by Benjamin Britten. Britten wrote this quartet to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the death of one of his great English musical predecessors Henry Purcell. And its last movement, a "Chacony" is a direct tribute to Purcell with its 21 variations on a sarabande-like theme. So we'll hear that complete Britten quartet right after we hear the single movement of the Schubert Quartettsatz in C Minor, on the second half of tonight's live Arts National concert broadcast featuring the Colorado String Quartet.

Still one or two audience members taking their seats, and even as they do so the house lights dim ... as we prepare to welcome, once again, the Colorado String Quartet: Julie Rosenfeld, Deborah Redding, Francesca Martin and Sharon Prater, and here they are

Live from Town Hall in Toronto tonight on Arts National, the Colorado String Quartet about to perform the Quartet Movement -- the Quartettsatz by Franz Schubert.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: Quartettsatz in C Minor by Franz Schubert. The only surviving movement of an apparently unfinished quartet, played for us tonight in concert by the Colorado String Quartet.

And the Colorado Quartet returning immediately to the stage to acknowledge the applause of the audience and to move directly to the next work on their program, the last work on the program, which is the String Quartet No. 2 in C Major, Opus 36 by Benjamin Britten. This is the work composed in 1945 to mark the 250th Anniversary of the death of Britten's predecessor, the English composer Henry Purcell. Quartet No. 2 in C by Benjamin Britten, about to be played by the Colorado String Quartet.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: That is an award-winning performance by the Colorado String Quartet. The String Quartet No. 2 in C Major, Opus 36 by Benjamin Britten, one of the works which six months or so ago helped the Colorado String Quartet win first prize at the Banff International String Quartet Competition. We heard the Colorado Quartet play that Benjamin Britten quartet live in concert tonight from Town Hall in Toronto on Arts National before a full and enthusiastic house. And as the audience at Town Hall in Toronto continues to applaud the Colorado Quartet, each of the four members is presented with her own bouquet of red roses. The young Colorado String Quartet back on stage for a bow: Julie Rosenfeld and Deborah Redding, violins, Francesca Martin, viola and Sharon Prater, cello.

(clapping)

Alexander: They've won the Naumburg Award, they won the Banff International String Quartet Competition, and their professional career is well and truly launched, including this week a Canadian tour, with tonight's performance in Toronto. And I see music in their hands as they return to the stage which means an encore from the Colorado Quartet.

Julie Rosenfeld: This is the last movement of the Dissonant Quartet of Mozart.

MUSIC

(clapping)

Alexander: The final allegro from the Quartet in C Major, K.465, by Mozart, known as the Dissonant Quartet. An encore performance tonight from Town Hall in Toronto by the Colorado String Quartet. Here they come again.

Burgundy skirts, white blouses; tired but happy looks I would say on the faces of the four young women of the Colorado String Quartet. It's quite a week for them, across Canada this week.

Alexander: And with that encore we've come to the end of tonight's live-to-air concert broadcast on Arts National from CBC Stereo. We've been listening, of course, to the Colorado String Quartet performing quartets by Beethoven, Webern, Schubert and Britten plus some Mozart as an encore. The Colorado String Quartet, one of the rising young stars in the chamber music firmament. They're still riding high after their double-header win this past year of first prize honours at the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Naumburg Award in the United States. And I have little doubt that we'll be hearing a great deal more from this fine young ensemble in the years ahead. Most immediately coming up for the group, their Canadian tour continues. It will take them tomorrow night to Salle Claude Champagne in Montreal, and then on Sunday afternoon they'll be in the Studio of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa.

Just to add a personal note, I must say it's been great for us at Arts National to renew our acquaintance with Julie Rosenfeld, Deborah Redding, Francesca Martin and Sharon Prater -- the Colorado String Quartet, reviving some happy memories of our coverage of their win at the Banff competition last April. Speaking of memories of Banff, if you enjoyed the excitement and the splendid music making of our on-location coverage of that event, let me give you advance notice that we'll be repeating those broadcasts on Arts National during an entire week early in the new year: January 23rd through 27th, 1984 the Banff International String Quartet Competition revisited on Arts National.