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GroundSwell Emerging Composers Competition 2025-26

GroundSwell is pleased to announce its biennial Emerging Composers Competition. The 2025-26 competition features Montreal's Quasar Saxophone Quartet, an ensemble of the highest calibre that has been committed to championing new Canadian music for the past 3 decades.

Three winners will be selected by a jury consisting of members of the quartet and established composers chosen by GroundSwell. The 1st place winner will be commissioned to compose a new work for saxophone quartet, approximately 5 minutes in duration. This piece will be performed by the Quasar Quartet in Winnipeg at a GroundSwell concert in March 2026 (exact date TBD), and the 2nd and 3rd place winners will receive cash prizes. The 1st place winner's commissioning fee, travel, and accommodation costs will be provided by GroundSwell. All decisions of the jury will be final.

Eligibility

This competition is open to composers in the early stages of their careers. Applicants must be Canadian citizens, permanent residents of Canada, or foreign citizens studying at a Canadian institution. Applicants may not be currently affiliated with GroundSwell.

Submissions

- Applicants are asked to submit a score and recording of one work for chamber ensemble (at least 2 players). High quality digital renderings are acceptable. Only one application per composer will be accepted.
- Applications will only be accepted digitally: email artistic@gswell.ca with "GroundSwell Composers Competition" as the subject. Include links for your score (.pdf only) and recording (.wav, .aif, or .mp3) via file sharing service such as Dropbox, WeTransfer, Google Drive, etc.
- Include a brief biography.
- There is no application fee.

Prizes

1st place: \$3000 commission and performance by Quasar

2nd place: \$750

3rd place: \$500

Timeline

April 15 th , 2025	Deadline for submissions (11:59PM, CDT)
June 15 th , 2025	Winner announced
December 15 th , 2025	Receipt of new work (completed score and parts)
March, 2026	Performance at GroundSwell Concert

Quasar Quartet

Ardent devotees of the music of our time, the Quasar saxophone quartet is dedicated to premiering and promoting contemporary music that is multi-dimensionally conceived. Celebrated for its energy, audacity and artistic vision, Quasar explores different aspects of artistic creation from instrumental music to live electronics, from improvisation to instrumental theatre.

The quartet has played throughout Canada, in the United States, Mexico and has also toured in numerous European countries. It appeared in international festivals such as Ars Musica (Bruxelles), SALT (Victoria), SIRP (Jakarta), Tonlagen (Dresden), NOW (Essen), Autumn Festival (Vilnius), etc.

The quartet reserved pride of place for a number of Canadian and international composers, with whom it has formed solid partnerships. It aims to contribute to the development of our musical language and provide a platform for new music experiments, exploration and production. The quartet premiered over 200 works over the course of its thirty years of activity.

Quasar also regularly collaborates with other ensembles from Canada and abroad and has also performed as a guest soloist with the Montreal Symphony, the Winnipeg Symphony and Hangzhou Philharmony.

Quasar is the winner of 10 Opus prizes awarded by the Conseil québécois de la musique. In 2019 Quasar received of the 2019 Friends of Canadian Music Award for its exceptional commitment to Canadian composers and their music.

About GroundSwell

Since 1991 GroundSwell has been challenging its audiences with an eclectic combination of all that is good about new music. As Manitoba's only series dedicated to presenting contemporary music, GroundSwell has showcased diverse programming featuring everything from inspiring interpretations of 20th-century classics to exciting fusions of visual art, theatre, dance, and the written word. Every season GroundSwell presents exciting new worlds of contemporary performance, from local music to international works, and is proud to promote and explore the best of Canada's diverse and vibrant new music scene. See gswell.ca for more details.

For more information

Contact David Litke, Artistic & Administrative Coordinator, GroundSwell, Inc. artistic@gswell.ca.