

Winners of the Thelonious Monk Competition Announced

By NATE CHINEN

WASHINGTON — [Jamison Ross](#) took first prize in the [Thelonious Monk International Jazz Drums Competition](#), awarded at the Kennedy Center on Sunday night. Mr. Ross, 24, from Jacksonville, Fla., brought a relaxed but commanding sense of swing to his performance with a competition house band, consisting of the saxophonist Jon Gordon, the pianist Geoffrey Keezer and the bassist Rodney Whitaker.

His victory reinforces perceptions of the Monk Competition as a proving ground for artists already active professionally. He can be heard on tour with the jazz singer Carmen Lundy, and he works regularly with the saxophonist Wess Anderson.

This year's other two finalists came with their own notable credentials. Justin Brown, 28, originally from Richmond, Calif., is a member of acclaimed groups led by the trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and the pianist Gerald Clayton, who have been finalists in previous Monk Competitions. Colin Stranahan, 26, originally from Denver, Colo., has likewise become an active part of the New York jazz scene. (He'll be at the [Village Vanguard](#) this week, starting Tuesday, with Kurt Rosenwinkel's Standards Trio.)

As the winner of this year's competition, Mr. Ross will receive a \$25,000 scholarship and a recording contract with the Concord Music Group. Second place went to Mr. Brown, and third place to Mr. Stranahan.

The panel of judges, representing several generations of elite jazz drummers, included Jimmy Cobb, Ben Riley, Peter Erskine, Carl Allen, Terri Lyne Carrington and Brian Blade.

The competition coincided with a gala, "Women, Music and Diplomacy," organized in honor of Madeleine Albright, the former U.S. Secretary State.

Performers on the gala included Aretha Franklin, who dedicated her performance of "Respect" to Madame Albright, and a number of highly regarded female jazz musicians, including the singers Patti Austin, Nnenna Freelon, Roberta Gambarini and Gretchen Parlato; the pianist Geri Allen; the trumpeter Ingrid Jensen; and the saxophonists Jane Ira Bloom, Claire Daly and Ada Rovatti. Herbie Hancock, the chairman of the Thelonious Monk Institute, and Wayne Shorter, who serves on its board of trustees, also performed, as did the trumpeter Chris Botti and many others.

The evening's finale, after the announcement of the competition winner, featured a revolving drum chair — with Mr. Ross and the entire panel of judges — on a version of the Monk composition "In Walked Bud."