

Melissa Aldana, Saxophonist, Wins Monk Competition

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The winner of the 2013 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Saxophone Competition is Melissa Aldana, 24, a tenor saxophonist originally from Santiago, Chile. She has been a working bandleader in New York since 2009 and has released two albums on the Inner Circle label.

Ms. Aldana won in Monday night's finals, at the Eisenhower Theater of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, with a performance of Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Mercer's "I Thought About You," as well as her own "Free Fall," with a rhythm section including the bassist Rodney Whitaker, the pianist Reginald Thomas and the drummer Carl Allen. The competition was judged by a panel of saxophonists including Jane Ira Bloom, Jimmy Heath, Branford Marsalis, Wayne Shorter and Bobby Watson.

Second and third place were won by Tivon Pennicott, 27, originally from Marietta, Ga., and Godwin Louis, 28, from Harlem. Like Ms. Aldana, they work in New York.

The competition, which had its semifinals on Sunday, focuses on a different instrument annually; this is its 26th year. The winner was announced after the concert, and the first prize is a \$25,000 scholarship with the Monk Institute and a recording contract with Concord Music Group.