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British-Born Trumpeter Wins Monk Competition

Trumpeter Darren Barrett, a native of Manchester, England, who has performed with Herbie Hancock, Roy Hargrove, Antonio Hart and other notable jazz musicians, won the 11th annual Thelonious Monk Institute's International Jazz Competition at Baird Auditorium Friday night.

"It was a very big surprise," Barrett said afterward. "I really didn't think I played all that well." The audience didn't agree. It was clearly impressed by the three pieces he performed, particularly his leisurely, blues-inflected rendition of "Sweet Lorraine," which revealed his great affection for Louis Armstrong, and an exuberant reprise of the seldom-heard Monk tune "Raise Four."

More important, the distinguished panel of judges—trumpeters Randy Brecker, Jon Faddis, Art Farmer, Wallace Roney, Arturo Sandoval and Clark Terry—saw great merit and promise in Barrett's performance. "He's got the skill, he's got the personality, he's got the sound. He's beautiful," Sandoval enthused.

Barrett, a graduate of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance at the New England Conservatory, now resides and teaches in Boston. He was chosen to receive the first-place award—and the \$20,000 in scholarship money that goes with it—out of a field of 15 semifinalists. The second-place prize of \$10,000 went to Diego Urcola, a native of Argentina and currently a member of Paquito D'Rivera's Quintet and the United Nation Orchestra. The third-place prize of \$5,000 was awarded to Avishai Cohen, an Israeli who has performed with jazz and blues luminaries Ira Sullivan, Jimmy Witherspoon and Jack Walrath. Given the cultural background of the winners, jazz suddenly seemed less like "America's classical music," as it's often called, and more like a universal language.

Hosted by Hancock and attended by several jazz greats, including Wayne Shorter and Jimmy Heath, the competition also showcased the music of Jack Perla, the winner of this year's Monk Institute/BMI Jazz Composers Competition, as well as several talented jazz players who've studied at the New England Conservatory. Pianist Eric Reed, bassist Rodney Whitaker and drummer Brian Blade adroitly accompanied each of the competitors, making the field even for all of the participants. —Mike Joyce