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A Trombonist's Winning Slide Into First

By MIKE JOYCE
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After five rounds of performances Sunday afternoon, the judges of the 16th annual Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Competition reached a swift and unanimous decision: 30-year-old trombonist Andre Hayward was named the winner of the prestigious event and awarded a scholarship prize of \$20,000.

Hayward, a native of Houston and a member of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, now shares a distinction won by saxophonist Joshua Redman and pianists Marcus Roberts and Jacky Terrasson early in their careers. Hayward had to bide his time, though. This is the first year the Monk competition, which usually focuses on a single instrument, was devoted to the much-overlooked art of jazz trombone.

"I was pretty confident," said Hayward,

backstage at the National Museum of Natural History's Baird Auditorium, where he was nervous by well-wishers. "I had the usual surmounting tension, but I was happy with the way I played."

But perhaps not as happy as the judges were. In fact, according to Steve Turge, a member of the judges' panel along with fellow veteran trombonists Steve Davis, Curtis Fuller, Slide Hampton, Julian Priestner and Graham Moncur III, the finals were almost over before they began. Early in the afternoon, when Hayward performed the customary set of three tunes—his choices included Monk's "Pannonica" and Fuller's "Time Off"—he immediately impressed the judges with his technical assurance and engaging musicality.

"He was the only one who was all the way there," said Turge, pointing to his heart. "He was mature and he was playing. Everybody else was working and playing."

David Baker, the renowned jazz scholar and director of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, agreed. "There was no doubt that Andre was superb," said Baker, who received the Monk Institute's Maria Fisher Founders Award during a break in the action onstage. "Many of the other players had a set plan, but with Andre there was real electricity."

The level of interplay was more critical this year than usual, since each finalist was heard in both quartet and sextet settings, firmly supported by pianist Eric Reed, bassist Robert Hurst, drummer Carl Allen, trumpeter Darren Barrett and saxophonist Jimmy Greene. During Hayward's set, the ensemble was firing on all cylinders. Afterward, the winner, a devoted fan of the late and legendary trombonist J.J. Johnson, said he plans to spend some of the prize money on piano and composition lessons. "I'm just beginning to get into writing now," he said, "and I want to get into it deep-



BY RONNIE JAMES

Andre Hayward fronts a quartet on his way to winning the first Thelonious Monk competition devoted to trombone.

er."

The second prize, a \$10,000 scholarship, went to David Gibson, 33, of Mobile, Ala., while Noah Bless, 35, of Cambridge, Mass., won third prize and \$5,000. Additional scholarships were awarded to fourth-place winner Karin Harris, 23, a Seattle-bred musician and the only woman to make the semifinals, and fifth-place winner Marshall Gilkes, 24, origi-

nally from Camp Springs. The institute's Jazz Composers Competition award, sponsored by BMI, went to Ijia Reijngoud, a 30-year-old trombonist from Leiden, the Netherlands.

The Monk Institute, named for the great pianist, composer and bandleader who died in 1982, was founded in 1986 by the Monk family and Maria Fisher, a lifelong devotee of the arts. Based in Washington, the institute fosters the development of young jazz musicians through a variety of international education programs.

All told, some 70 trombonists submitted audition tapes to the competition this year. Only musicians who had not yet recorded an album under their own name were eligible to compete. Eleven semifinalists performed at the two-day event, which was hosted by pianist Herbie Hancock and actor Billy Dee Williams. The competition, sponsored by General Motors, was taped by BET for airing in October.