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Party lines: people, places and politics

## Jazzy array of star musicians

**M**onday night's gathering at the Kennedy Center must go down as the most understatedly advertised event of the year. The plain white invitation simply read, "An Evening of Jazz." The palm fronds and blue lighting on the Eisenhower Theater stage acceptably stabbed at a Copacabana feel but hardly suggested what lay ahead.

First, **Herbie Hancock** took the floor. Then **George Benson**, followed by **Wayne Shorter, T.S. Monk, Clark Terry, Dee Dee Bridgewater** and a seemingly endless parade of jazz guitar greats. And that was just the window dressing.

The marquee players were there to adorn and applaud three finalists at the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition, this year featuring the guitar. With a star-studded backing band, each performed two songs, and then the judges had to decide.

The prize went to **Lage Lund**, an unassuming Norwegian with a shaggy-dog haircut a la pop star Beck. His reward: not just monetary, but a chance to close the show playfully dueling with Mr. Benson — decked out in shades and a black velvet suit — on the classic "How High the Moon."



Photographs by James F. Brantley/The Washington Times

Given that a Japanese woman, **Junko Moriya**, won the composition prize, it's safe to say that jazz, with all its African-American roots, remains America's most uncontroversial, unassailable cultural export.

The party in the upstairs terrace was, in a sense, a classy pep talk on that same subject. Institute Chairman **Thelonious Monk Jr.** marveled at hearing jazz in Alaska, the astounding technical proficiency of the younger generation and new advances in sound technology. Mixing in anecdotes of daddy Thelonious Monk's days at the Village Vanguard, and decked out in a natty white suit, he perfectly affected his role as missionary of the idiom.

New Orleans, that idiom's birthplace, also was on everyone's mind, inspiring both

a rousing scat tribute from Miss Bridgewater and company during the concert and a lot of Big Easy reminiscing later.

"My band's scattered all over the place," said **David Mooney**, a New Orleans native who took third prize and is staying with his brother in the District. As for his home: "There was four feet of water in the street. I don't know whether it got into the house or not."

As corporate sponsors, playwrights, jazz DJs and all the guitarists faded into the night — or wandered over to the Watergate for a nightcap — Mr. Monk Jr. remained behind to have a smoke and wave goodbye to the guests.

They'll be back next year for the 20th anniversary of the competition, when the piano will be featured.

Thelonious Monk Jr. congratulated Junko Moriya, winner of the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Composers Competition Monday night at the Kennedy Center.

— Stefan Sullivan