



**HERBIE HANCOCK**  
**INSTITUTE OF JAZZ**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Semifinalists Announced for 2019 Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International  
Guitar Competition, December 2-3 in Washington, D.C.**

***Competition Festivities Include All-Star Gala Concert Honoring  
Renowned Trumpeter/Composer Terence Blanchard***

Washington, D.C. —Twelve outstanding young jazz guitarists from around the world have been selected to compete in the 2019 Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Guitar Competition on December 2-3 in Washington, D.C.

The semifinalists are: **Cecil Alexander** of Muskegon, Michigan; **Joseph Bell** of Princeton, New Jersey; **Will Brahm** of Portland, Oregon; **François Chanvallon** of Paris, France; **Lucian Gray** of Toronto, Canada; **Max Light** of Bethesda, Maryland; **Armen Movsesyan** of Los Angeles, California; **Evgeny Pobozhiv** of Seversk, Russia; **Matt Sewell** of St. Louis, Missouri; **Juan Vidaurre** of Caracas, Venezuela; **Tal Yahalom** of Jerusalem, Israel; and **Francesco Zampini** of Rome, Italy.

These aspiring jazz musicians will compete in the Semifinals round, taking place on Monday, December 2nd, from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian. The semifinalists will perform before an all-star judging panel of internationally acclaimed jazz guitarists: **Stanley Jordan**, **Lionel Loueke**, **Russell Malone**, **Pat Metheny**, **Chico Pinheiro**, **Lee Ritenour** and **John Scofield**. Each semifinalist will perform for 15 minutes accompanied by a stellar rhythm section featuring pianist Reggie Thomas, bassist Yasushi Nakamura, and drummer Carl Allen.

From this group, the judges will select three finalists to perform in the Competition Finals at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts on Tuesday evening, December 3rd. At stake is more than \$150,000 in scholarships and prizes, including a \$30,000 first place scholarship and guaranteed recording contract with Concord Music Group; a \$15,000 second place scholarship; and a \$10,000 third place scholarship. The evening will culminate with an All-Star Gala Concert featuring performances by **Herbie Hancock**, **Dee Dee Bridgewater**, **Bobby Watson** and many other jazz greats. The Institute will present its Maria Fisher Founder's Award to multi-GRAMMY Award-winning trumpeter, composer and educator Terence Blanchard. Many of his former Institute students, including recording artists **Gretchen Parlato**, **Walter Smith III**, **Dayna Stephens** and others leading the next generation of major jazz artists, will take the stage to pay tribute to Blanchard.

Proceeds from the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Guitar Competition and All-Star Gala Concert will support the Institute's public school education programs in Washington D.C., Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, Newark, San Francisco and the Mississippi Delta.



## HERBIE HANCOCK INSTITUTE OF JAZZ

### **Editors, please note the following event and ticket information**

#### **Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Guitar Competition Semifinals**

Monday, December 2nd at 12 noon with ticket distribution at 11:00 a.m.

Rasmuson Theater at the National Museum of the American Indian

4<sup>th</sup> St. & Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C.

Tickets for the Semifinals are free of charge but limited, and will be distributed by the Smithsonian Associates at the National Museum of the American Indian on a first-come, first-served basis beginning at 11:00 a.m.

#### **Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Guitar Competition Finals and All-Star Gala Concert**

Tuesday, December 3rd at 7:30 p.m.

Kennedy Center Eisenhower Theater

2700 F St., NW, Washington, D.C.

Tickets are \$35 to \$125 and may be purchased via the Kennedy Center box office in person, by calling 800.444.1324, or online at [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org). Information regarding VIP packages, which include a post-event VIP Cast Party, is available from the Institute at 202.364.7272.

### **2019 Competition Semifinalist Bios**

**Cecil Alexander**, of Muskegon, Michigan, is a graduate of the Berklee College of Music and William Paterson University. He co-founded the group Visen in 2016 with fellow Berklee graduate Ari Jaye Alexander, and the group released its first EP, *Shoulder Deep*, in 2017. A winner of the 2017 Wilson Center Jazz Guitar Competition and the 2018 Lee Ritenour Six String Theory Competition in the Jazz category, Alexander counts Peter Bernstein, Kurt Rosenwinkel and Jesse Van Ruller among his key influences. He has performed or recorded with artists such as Nathan East, Luis Perdomo, James Weidman and Pat Bianchi, to name a few.

**Joseph Bell** is a Princeton, New Jersey native who is currently completing his final year in the Columbia-Juilliard Exchange Program in New York. When not pursuing his bachelor's in biology or working as a research assistant at Columbia Medical Center, Bell is an active performer, appearing with artists including Andra Day, Macy Gray, Eric Harland, Wynton Marsalis and Bob Mintzer. He has served as a featured guitarist on three full-length albums and counts top venues like the Blue Note, Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, the Kennedy Center and Birdland among his performance credits.

**Will Brahm**, of Portland, Oregon, received his Bachelor of Music in Jazz Guitar Studies from California State University Long Beach, where he was a five-time recipient of the school's KJazz scholarship. He has performed and recorded with artists such as Sara Gazarek, Jane Monheit, Gretchen Parlato, Kim Richmond and Arturo Sandoval, and has appeared on tour at venues across the United States and in Malaysia, the Philippines, Spain and Turkey. Brahm's recent recorded output includes a duet album, *Will Brahm & Lia Booth*, in 2018 and the 2019 release *Venture Atlas*.



## HERBIE HANCOCK INSTITUTE OF JAZZ

**François Chanvallon**, of Paris, France, began his musical training at age 10. After attending the IMEP Paris College of Music, he earned a Bachelor of Music with honors from the Berklee College of Music. He has studied privately with Darren Barrett, Mick Goodrick, Rick Peckham, Jaleel Shaw and Miguel Zenon, among others. Currently a master's degree candidate at the Manhattan School of Music, Chanvallon has worked with artists including Chris Cheek, Gary Burton and Kurt Elling, and was a 2019 finalist in the 7 Virtual Jazz Club Competition. He appears on Darren Barrett's recent release *The EVI Sessions*.

**Lucian Gray**, of Toronto, Canada, attended the Berklee College of Music on the prestigious Slight Family Scholarship, studying with George Garzone, Mick Goodrick, Greg Osby, Dave Santoro and Mark Whitfield. He has appeared alongside notable musicians such as Guido Basso, Il Divo, Molly Johnson and Neil Swainson, among others, and has performed at prominent festivals throughout Canada including the TD Toronto Jazz Festival, the Beaches Jazz Fest and the Calgary Jazz Festival. Gray is currently Head of Jazz Studies at Discovery Through the Arts, a nonprofit music school in Toronto, and also plays the piano and upright and electric bass.

**Max Light**, of Bethesda, Maryland, received his Bachelor of Music in Jazz Performance degree from New England Conservatory and a Master of Music in Jazz Performance from the Aaron Copland School at Queens College. He has performed and recorded with Donny McCaslin, Jason Palmer, Noah Preminger, Walter Smith III and Tia Fuller, and appeared at the DC Jazz Festival, New York's Winter Jazz Festival, Monterey Next Generation Jazz Festival and Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival. Light is also an accomplished educator, with credits as an instructor at Queens Music Academy and the Washington, D.C.-based Jazz Academy of Music.

**Armen Movsesyan**, was born in Sochi, Russia and grew up in Los Angeles. He began studying classical piano at the age of six and picked up the guitar at 15. Movsesyan went on to receive a Bachelor of Music in Studio & Jazz Guitar from the University of Southern California and a Master of Music in Jazz Studies from the University of North Texas. His group Ararat, which combines rock and jazz influences with traditional Armenian folk music, released its debut album in 2016, with a second album planned for summer 2020. An active educator, Movsesyan is the author of the method book *Perfect Picking*.

**Evgeny Pobozhiy** was born in Seversk, Russia, beginning classical guitar studies at age nine and later studying jazz at the Rostov State Conservatory in Rostov-on-Don. After completing his studies, he received an invitation from Igor Butman to join the renowned saxophonist's Quintet, and the Moscow Jazz Orchestra. Pobozhiy has since performed on stages including the Montreal Jazz Festival, Rochester Jazz Festival, Moscow's Triumph of Jazz Festival and the International Jazz Day All-Star Global Concert in Saint Petersburg. He maintains his own quintet, which combines elements of jazz, funk, hip-hop and modern classical music.



## HERBIE HANCOCK INSTITUTE OF JAZZ

**Matt Sewell** is a St. Louis, Missouri native who began formal musical training on piano at age seven, ultimately settling on guitar at age nine. He recently graduated from the Berklee School of Music, where as a student he worked with artists including Terence Blanchard, Emanuel Harrold, Adam Larson, Quiana Lynell and Noah Preminger. Sewell has appeared on major stages in the United States, Australia, Canada, Germany and Poland, with his credits including the Blue Note in New York, Charlie Parker Jazz Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, Ottawa Jazz Festival and Spoleto Festival USA.

**Juan Vidaurre** is a native of Caracas, Venezuela who is currently pursuing his Bachelor of Music at The Juilliard School. A classically trained pianist from age three, Vidaurre began studying the guitar at 11. After moving to Miami, Florida, he studied at the Dillard Center for the Arts and attended the Juilliard Jazz Summer Program in West Palm Beach and the famed Litchfield Jazz Camp in Connecticut. During his time at Juilliard, Vidaurre has studied with Peter Bernstein, Ari Hoenig, Lage Lund and Brad Mehldau, and is active in New York as a bandleader and sideman.

**Tal Yahalom**, of Jerusalem, Israel, is a guitarist, composer and bandleader who holds a BFA from the School of Jazz & Contemporary Music at The New School. Yahalom received first-prize honors at the 2015 Detroit Jazz Festival National Guitar Competition, as well as third prize at the 2016 Montreux Jazz Festival International Guitar Competition. He regularly performs at notable venues in New York, appearing solo, leading his own groups and serving as sideman. Yahalom's experimental trio KADAWA has toured in Germany, Israel, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

**Francesco Zampini**, of Rome, Italy, began his guitar studies at age 10. He graduated *cum laude* from the Conservatorio Luigi Cherubini in Florence, where he studied with Umberto Fiorentino, Fabrizio Sferra and Raffaello Pareti, later completing his master's at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. In 2016 Zampini took second prize at the Concorso Nazionale Chicco Bettinardi in Piacenza and in 2017 won first-prize honors at the Concorso Chitarristico Nazionale Davide Lufano Chaves. He has performed alongside Darcy James Argue, Scott Hamilton, Alex Sipiagin and Ben van Gelder, and recently released his debut album *Early Perspectives*.

### **Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz**

The Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz is a nonprofit education organization offering the world's most promising young musicians college level training by internationally acclaimed jazz masters and presenting public school music education programs for young people around the world. The Institute preserves, perpetuates and expands jazz as a global art form, and utilizes jazz as a means to unite people of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities. All of the Institute's programs are provided free of charge. Founded in 1986 as the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, the organization began operating as the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz in January 2019 in recognition of Mr. Hancock's commitment to the Institute since its establishment, his expert guidance as Institute Chairman, and his immense contributions to and impact on music, education and humanity. [hancockinstitute.org](http://hancockinstitute.org)



## HERBIE HANCOCK INSTITUTE OF JAZZ

### **Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Competition**

Formerly the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz International Competition, the Hancock Institute Competition is recognized as the world's most prestigious jazz competition and for discovering the next generation of jazz masters. Each year, major scholarships and prizes including recording contracts are awarded to the talented young musicians participating in the Competition. The scholarships help pay tuition for college-level jazz education studies and provide funds for private, specialized instruction.

Since 1987, the Competition has launched the careers of a number of major jazz artists including saxophonist Joshua Redman; vocalists Cécile McLorin Salvant, Jane Monheit and Jazzmeia Horn; pianists Marcus Roberts and Kris Bowers; bassist Ben Williams; and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, among others. These artists and dozens more from past competitions have forged successful careers as performing and recording artists, as well as music educators helping to perpetuate America's legacy of jazz. Past judges have included Quincy Jones, Diana Krall, Branford Marsalis, Christian McBride, Arturo Sandoval, Dianne Reeves, Slide Hampton, Roy Haynes and many others. [hancockinstitute.org/competition/](http://hancockinstitute.org/competition/)

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