

Hancock Competition Reveals 2019 Semifinalists

12 guitarists from seven countries will compete for three finals slots in Washington on Dec. 2

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Russell Malone, seen here at the 65th Newport Jazz Festival, will be one of the judges for the 2019 Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Guitar Competition. (photo: Joseph Allen)

The [Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Guitar Competition](#), scheduled for December 2 and 3 in Washington, D.C., has announced its 12 semifinalists.

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, which takes place on Monday, December 2, from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian. They 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 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 3. 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 then present its Maria Fisher Founder's Award to multi-Grammy Award-winning trumpeter, composer, and educator Terence Blanchard, many of whose former Institute students, including recording artists Gretchen Parlato, Walter Smith III, and Dayna Stephens, will take the stage to pay tribute to him.

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, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, Newark, San Francisco, and the Mississippi Delta.