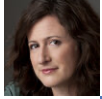


## Pianist Jahari Stampley just won a prestigious jazz competition — he's only 24

October 18, 2023 2:42 PM ET | Heard on [All Things Considered](#)



[Neda Ulaby](#)

It's been quite a birthday for [Jahari Stampley](#). All right around the same time, he turned 24 and released his first album, called *Still Listening*. On Sunday, he won one of the biggest awards in jazz.

"It's just overwhelming and also just amazing," Stampley told NPR after judges awarded him first place at [the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Competition](#). "I just have a respect for everybody that participated in the competition. These are all people I've always looked up to and loved when I was growing up."

Stampley was only 14 when he started playing the piano. Soon, he was winning high school competitions. After graduating from the Manhattan School of Music in 2021, he toured with [Stanley Clarke](#). But Jahari Stampley could've started his career even earlier. His mother is a storied Chicago jazz figure. [D-Erania Stampley](#) runs a music school and has been nominated for Grammys in seven different categories.

"She never forced me to play music," Stampley says affectionately of his mother. "She just silently would play records or do certain subtle things to try to push me in that direction. And I think that's a big part of why I became a better musician, because I genuinely love to play and I genuinely love music. I started it because I loved it, you know?"

The esteem in which the younger Stampley holds his mother is obvious. "She's just really a genius," he says with pride. "She knows how to fly planes. She just became a literal certified pilot, and she just did her first cross-country flight. She can do anything."

The two recently toured together as part of a jazz trio, with the elder Stampley playing synthesizers and saxophone, and Miguel Russell on drums and synths. Videos of mother and son performing together show a pair bespectacled and serene.



*A 24-year-old piano prodigy, Jahari Stampley, has won one of the most prestigious awards in jazz. The competition held by the Herbie Hancock Institute is widely seen as anointing new stars.*

This year marks the first time the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz has produced its international competition since the onset of the pandemic. The competition has undergone various rebrandings and locale changes over the years, but continues to be widely regarded as a launching pad for stars.

Critic Giovanni Russonello, who [covered Stampley's performance for \*The New York Times\*](#), wrote that "with his tall, wiry frame hunched over the piano, [Stampley's] style arrived like a lightning bolt...His playing felt unforced, as if powered from an internal engine. This was an artist you wanted to hear again, and to know more about."

Stampley, whose ease with contemporary idioms [extends to his design of iPhone apps](#), says he hopes to model his career on heroes such as [Jon Batiste](#), who in 2022 became the youngest jazz musician in recent memory to win a Grammy for album of the year, and on Herbie Hancock himself.

"I've always loved someone like Herbie," Stampley said. "Not only can he embody the spirit of jazz and jazz itself, but he never limits himself into a bubble of anything that he creates artistically. And I feel like for me as an artist, I just always think about playing honestly. I think I won't limit myself to just jazz per se, but I want to expand beyond in the same way that I feel the people that I love have done, for example, like [Jacob Collier](#) or Jon Batiste or, you know, Herbie."

*Edited for the web by Rose Friedman. Produced for the web by Beth Novey.*