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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 18, 2006

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**THELONIOUS MONK INSTITUTE OF JAZZ
CELEBRATES 20th ANNIVERSARY --- MUSIC LEGENDS
JOIN POLITICAL LEADERS FOR STAR-STUDED GALA**

**STEVIE WONDER HONORED BY FORMER SECRETARIES OF STATE
MADELEINE ALBRIGHT AND COLIN POWELL**

**Armenia's Tigran Hamasyan Wins First Place
In 2006 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition**

Washington, DC — The world's greatest jazz artists were on stage at The Kennedy Center last night to honor the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and its two decades of music education. Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Ron Carter, Patti Austin, John Patitucci, Terence Blanchard, George Duke, Terri Lyne Carrington and many others joined a group of young artists who have emerged from the Institute's numerous education programs over the years in a star-studded Gala Celebration that was televised for broadcast on PBS and BET and will be broadcast nationally over NPR and internationally over Voice of America.

The evening was the culmination of a weekend of festivities paying tribute to the Institute, the world's leading jazz education organization. The weekend kicked off with President and Mrs. Bush hosting a dinner and concert at the White House. The East Room concert, hosted by Barbara Walters, will be telecast as an "In Performance at the White House" PBS Special. Ms. Walters shared with the audience her personal experiences and love of jazz through her father Lou Walters, owner of the famed Latin Quarter jazz and music clubs located in Boston (opened in 1937), Miami Beach (opened in 1940) and New York City (opened in 1942). The concert included performances by Anita Baker, Herbie Hancock, Nnenna Freelon, Clark Terry and many others.

The White House Concert was followed on Friday by a luncheon in the United States Capitol hosted by Senators Ted Stevens and Thad Cochran and Congressman John Conyers. All three of the legislators are major advocates of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and have Institute public school programs in their states and district.

Saturday featured the Semi-Finals of the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition at the Smithsonian Institution's Baird Auditorium. The Thelonious Monk Competition is the world's most prestigious jazz competition and has launched the careers of many young jazz artists including pianists Marcus Roberts, Jacky Terrasson, Joey DeFrancesco; saxophonist Joshua Redman and vocalists Jane Monheit and Tierney Sutton. Saturday's Semi-Finals featured 12 aspiring young artists competing for major scholarships and the worldwide recognition associated with participating in this annual internationally acclaimed music event.

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Last night's 20th Anniversary Gala Concert featured the three Finalists selected by the distinguished panel of judges, including Herbie Hancock, Andrew Hill, Danilo Perez, Renee Rosnes, Billy Taylor and Randy Weston. Each of the three Finalists – Gerald Clayton, Tigran Hamasyan and Aaron Parks – performed before a packed house at The Kennedy Center. Following the Finalists' performances, the evening shifted to an All-Star concert featuring a series of historic performances including pairings of Wayne Shorter and Joshua Redman, Terence Blanchard with Patti Austin, Jane Monheit with Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter, and Monk's son T.S. Monk performing Thelonious Monk's "Four In One."

Honorary Co-Chairs of the 20th Anniversary Celebration Madeleine Albright and Colin Powell shared with the audience their love of jazz and support of the Institute's global programs that range from Calcutta, India to Lima, Peru and Cairo, Egypt. Albright and Powell presented the Institute's annual award, the Maria Fisher Founders Award, to Stevie Wonder for his long time support of the Institute and jazz education. Albright and Powell were joined on stage by Quincy Jones and Herbie Hancock for the presentation.

Hosts for the evening included Quincy Jones, Phylicia Rashad and Billy Dee Williams. The 20th Anniversary Celebration was sponsored by General Motors and Northrop Grumman. The Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition was sponsored by G.M.A.C Financial Services.

The evening concluded with the announcement of this year's Piano Competition winners:

First Place: Tigran Hamasyan
Second Place: Gerald Clayton
Third Place: Aaron Parks

About Tigran Hamasyan

Tigran Hamasyan was born in Gyumri, Armenia and began playing piano at age 10. He currently attends the University of Southern California where he is studying jazz piano. Influenced by Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, Art Tatum, Miles Davis and Bud Powell, Hamasyan began writing his first piano compositions at a young age. He recently won first prize at the Monaco Jazz Soloist Competition and has performed at concerts, competitions, festivals throughout Europe.

About Gerald Clayton

Gerald Clayton was born in Utrecht, The Netherlands and was raised in Los Angeles. He began playing piano at the age of five. Currently, Clayton is pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree in Jazz Studies at the University of Southern California. In addition to his studies, Clayton performs frequently and has played with a host of well-respected musicians including Benny Green, Mulgrew Miller, Kenny Baron, and Clark Terry. He recently appeared on *Back in the Swing of Things* with the Clayton Brothers.

About Aaron Parks

Aaron Parks was raised in Seattle, Washington and began playing piano at age 10, learning mostly by ear. He began his career in jazz at the age of 16 after leaving the University of Washington to focus more intently on jazz studies at the Manhattan School of Music in New York. Parks won first place in the 5th American Jazz Piano Competition and is a Cole Porter Fellow of the American Pianist Association. Currently, he tours with Terence Blanchard and is featured on Blanchard's CDs *Bounce* and *Flow*.