

JONATHAN SARAGA

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Manhattan, NYC native, trumpeter and composer Jonathan Saraga has been said by All About Jazz to possess the musical “wisdom and maturity of veterans more than twice his age,” and that “his chops, lust for musical life and don't-box-me-into-a-stylistic-corner mentality make him seem like the musical offspring of trumpeters Dave Douglas and Ambrose Akinmusire.”



A few years after receiving the Fred Mazart Music Award in 2005 as he began his collegiate studies, Jonathan won the 2007 International Trumpet Guild Jazz Solo Competition. Shortly after receiving his Bachelor of Music degree, he competed again, this time as one of five finalists in the 2009 Carmine Caruso International Jazz Trumpet Competition. After obtaining his Master of Music degree in 2011, Jonathan was among two trumpeters selected from an international pool to participate in the 2011 School for Improvisational Music summer intensive program. That same year, he self-released his debut album, *First Vision*, which All About Jazz deemed "a skillfully conceived and exquisitely realized debut that brings to mind the edgy, envelope-pushing hard bop of many a Blue Note record in the early 1960s." They even hailed it as a "stand up and take notice musical offering," and spoke of its "rare blend of individuality and maturity." World-renowned trumpeter Jim Rotondi deemed Jonathan's playing on the album as "unique" and "inventive", and said that it breathes "soul, intelligence, great technique and acute musical awareness." In 2014, it was re-released on the Blue Truffle Music record label.

That same year, after touring the U.S. with an off-Broadway production of *Damn Yankees*, and after working as lead and solo trumpeter for Princess cruise lines, Jonathan was awarded an audition for the Artist Diploma program at Juilliard in, having been one of only two trumpeters even considered. A year later, in 2015, he was one of only five trumpeters invited to participate in the Banff Summer Intensive Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music in Alberta, Canada, and in 2016, received an ASCAP Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award for his composition, “Uprising”, featured on his second album, *Journey to a New World* (Fresh Sound Records/2017).

Jonathan’s sophomore release which has been called “inventive” and “assertive” by *JazzWise*, (U.K.) has also been said to feature “astonishing maturity” (*Jazz Magazine*, France), “a deft compositional approach and some first-rate musicianship” (*All About Jazz*, U.S.). The Saraga-penned original compositions also received a total of 4 semi-finalist nominations and 1 finalist/Honorable Mention nominations in the 2016 and 2017 International Songwriting Competitions, the latter award being received by only 1% of the original 16,000+ entries from 140 countries. The album has aired on radio stations around the world, and has been featured on Kansas Public Radio’s Top 10 Jazz CD list 2 weeks in a row, amongst albums by Esperanza Spaulding, Dr. Lonnie Smith, and Christian McBride. Jonathan’s release has also received three 4-star reviews in *JazzWise* (U.K) and *All About Jazz* (U.S.) as well as a interview with jazz author, Ruth Fischer.

In addition to completing his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 2019, Dr. Saraga was accepted to the 2019 Early Fall Musicians in Residence program at the Banff Center, and achieved finalist status in the 2019 New

Jazz Works grant presented by Chamber Music America. In 2020 he was one of three trumpeters to make it to the final round of auditions for the GRAMMY-winning Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra's 4th Trumpet Chair, and one of sixteen to receive a commission from the International Society of Jazz Arrangers and Composers. He was also selected to present at the International Society for Improvised Music conference at Melbourne Conservatorium of Music in Melbourne, Australia as well as at the Association for Popular Music Education conference at Edinburgh Napier University in Edinburgh, Scotland. Also in 2020, Saraga received a Downbeat Student Music Award in the Outstanding Performance Undergraduate Category for Latin Group, was selected to participate in the BMI Jazz Composers Workshop, and received grants from United States Artists, the University of Colorado Boulder Music Advisory Board, the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation, the Actors Fund/Local 802 Musicians Union, the Jazz Foundation of America, the Afro-Latin Jazz Alliance, and the Recording Academy/MusiCares.

So far in 2021, Jonathan has received Downbeat Student Music Awards in the Graduate College Outstanding Arrangements category for Small Ensemble and Outstanding Performance Undergraduate Category for Latin Group, has been accepted into Chashama's chaNorth Artist in Residence program, has made it to the finals in the selection process for the Haleakala National Park Artist in Residence program, has made it onto the waitlist for the Millay Colony of the Art's Core Residency program and has achieved semi-finalist in the Unsigned Only Music Competition. Saraga was also one of two finalists to compete for the U.S. Air Force Academy Band's jazz/commercial trumpet vacancy and U.S. Navy Band Commodores' jazz trumpet vacancy.

Since 2006, Saraga has appeared on nearly 30 albums and has been actively performing throughout Europe, Asia, the Caribbean, Canada and the U.S. He's played with the Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra, Darcy James Argue's Secret Society, the Birdland Big Band, The Mingus Big Band, Orrin Evans' Captain Black Big Band, the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra, and the Jimmy Greene Big Band, Remy Le Boeuf's Assembly of Shadows Orchestra, the Terraza Big Band, the Valery Ponomarev Big Band, Manuel Valera's New Cuban Express Big Band, the Jihye Lee Jazz Orchestra, the Erica Seguire/Shannon Baker Jazz Orchestra and the Migiwa Miyajima Jazz Orchestra, as well as in ensembles led by Tyshawn Sorey, Steve Coleman, and Henry Cole. He has performed as a sideman at Carnegie Hall, Joe's Pub, Symphony Space, the Jazz Gallery, the Barclay's Center, Smoke, Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, and Rockefeller Center to name only a few prominent NYC venues. As a leader, Jonathan has been performing his original music with his own groups all over NYC at places like Seeds, Cornelia St. Café, The Bar Next Door, Jazz at the Kitano, Shapeshifter Lab and Smalls Jazz Club.

As he continues onward along the path of a performing artist, Jonathan also makes time to coach aspiring musicians. In addition to continuing his service as an educator for the Gramercy Brass Orchestra of New York going on seven years, Jonathan has served as ensemble coach, trumpet teacher, masterclass instructor and Jazz History lecturer for the Afro-Latin Jazz Academy of Music, New York Ensemble Classes, the Lyceum Kennedy International School, Jubilee Enrichment Programs, Jazz Empowers and The New York Jazz Academy. He also worked for six semesters as a Graduate Part-Time Instructor at the University of Colorado, Boulder, which included three semesters of ensemble coaching and conducting as well as three semesters of lecturing for a 100+ student History of Jazz class for non-majors.