

# JONATHAN SARAGA

Trumpeter | Flugelhornist | Composer | Arranger | Educator | Producer | Doctor of Musical Arts  
B.M.\M.M.\D.M.A. | [www.jonathansaraga.com](http://www.jonathansaraga.com) | [jonathan@jonathansaraga.com](mailto:jonathan@jonathansaraga.com) | (347) 574-2003



Jonathan's professional music career officially began in 2002 when he was cast as an orchestral trumpeter in the Paramount film, *Changing Lanes*. That same year he would begin performing at the Jazz Standard with the Jazz Standard Youth Orchestra, which he went on to do, once a month, for the next three years. Having acquired necessary professional and artistic skills during that period, Jonathan began recording as a sideman in 2005, and has since recorded on nearly 30 albums including two as a leader.

That same year, after performing at the National Arts Club, Jonathan received the Fred Mazart Music Award and began pursuing his Bachelor of Music degree at SUNY Purchase. Two years later, he competed in and won the 2007 International Trumpet Guild Jazz Solo Competition, and shortly after

receiving his B.M. in 2009, Jonathan competed again, this time as one of five finalists in the Carmine Caruso International Jazz Trumpet Competition. Upon starting the pursuit of his Master of Music degree in 2010, he would travel to Kuala-Lumpur Malaysia to perform at the Anu-gerah Industri Muzik awards with Malaysian pop sensation, Zee Avi and once back in NYC, at the Blue Note Jazz Festival with the J.C. Hopkins Biggish Band. After receiving his M.M. in 2011, Saraga became one of two trumpeters selected from an international pool to participate in the School for Improvisational Music summer intensive program.

That next year, in 2012, Jonathan self-released his debut album, "First Vision", at Smalls Jazz Club in NYC, which was hailed as "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" by *All About Jazz*. 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." The album received airplay throughout the east-coast on stations like 90.3 FM the Core, Weaa 88.9, BreakThru Radio's show the Jazz Hole, [www.jamcityamerica.net](http://www.jamcityamerica.net), and Pulin4Jazz. A few years later, in 2014, it was re-released on the Blue Truffle Music record label.

In 2014, 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 nomination 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. The release also received three 4-star reviews in *JazzWise* (U.K.) and *All About Jazz* (U.S.) and has earned him multiple interviews and features with jazz authors/scholars, Ruth Fischer and Debbie Burke. Before completing his Doctor of Musical Arts degree, Saraga headlined the first Caribbean International Jazz Festival in Les Cayes, Haiti in 2018 performing in front of thousands, and was selected as an Artist in Residence for the 2019 Early Fall Musicians in Residence program at the Banff Center. That same year, the newly hood-

ed, Dr. Saraga made it to the final round of the New Jazz Works grant competition presented by Chamber Music America, and a year later 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, as well as one of sixteen to receive a commission from the International Society of Jazz Arrangers and Composers.

Jonathan 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 in 2020. Between '20 and '21, Saraga received two Downbeat Student Music Awards—one in the Outstanding Performance Undergraduate Category for Latin Group, and the other in the Graduate College Outstanding Arrangements Category for Small Ensemble. He also 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, totaling nearly \$10,000. Additional 2021 accomplishments include selected participation in the BMI Jazz Composers Workshop, acceptance into Chashama's chaNorth Artist in Residence program, finalist status in the Haleakala National Park Artist in Residence program, waitlist status for the Millay Colony for the Arts Core Residency program and semi-finalist status in the 2021 Unsigned Only Music Competition. Jonathan also competed as one of two finalists in the U.S. Airforce Academy Band's jazz/commercial trumpet vacancy and the U.S. Navy Band Commodores jazz trumpet vacancy auditions held in Washington DC, Washington. In 2022, he became a selected member of the Recording Academy's New York Chapter.

In New York City, where Saraga resides, he performs and records as a featured musician with Festival of New Trumpet Music, having participated in two world premieres, and has played in highly acclaimed and/or Grammy-nominated/winning organizations such as 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, the Jimmy Greene Big Band, Remy Le Boeuf's Assembly of Shadows Orchestra, the Terraza Big Band, the Valery Ponomarev Big Band, the Emilio Solla Jazz Orchestra, the Steven Feifke Big Band, Manuel Valera's New Cuban Express Big Band, the Samuel Torres Big Band, the Jihye Lee Jazz Orchestra, the Hyeseon Hong Jazz Orchestra, the Tracy Yang Jazz Orchestra, the Erica Seguine/Shannon Baker Jazz Orchestra, the Migiwa Miyajima Jazz Orchestra and Brass Against, as well as 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, and as a leader, Jonathan has been performing his original music with his own groups all over NYC at places like iBeam, Seeds, Cornelia St. Café, The Bar Next Door, Jazz at the Kitano, Shapeshifter Lab and Smalls Jazz Club.

Besides professing a passion and skillset for music within the 'jazz' idiom, Jonathan's usage of sound draws from and contributes to many other forms of art. He has composed and arranged music for lyricists, and has provided musical accompaniment for dance classes, workshops, and performances presented by the Martha Graham Dance Academy and the Jeffrey Ballet School. He has even co-choreographed plays and has played for Marc Jacobs fashion runway shows. Jonathan's musicianship also reaches the health and wellness crowd, as he has served as a regular performer at the New Life Expo, and as a musical aid for art exhibitions, including a Syrian-post war realist art exhibition presented by ChaShaMa, Yoga classes at Jivamukti, meditation classes for WeWork and poetry readings at the Firehouse Space, reaching audiences at St. Peter's Church at the Citicorp Center, The Tibet House, Triskelion Arts the Firehouse Space, the Jewish Community Center, the New York Insight Meditation Center, and the NYU Skirball Theater. Jonathan also serves as an in-demand commercial trumpeter with several acclaimed entertainment corporations such as Starrock Productions, Aragon Artists, Element Music, Chevy Chevis Entertainment, The Eleven, 45 Riots, and Elán Artists.

As he continues onward along the path of a performing artist, Jonathan also makes time to coach aspiring musicians. His private teaching studio has received over 29 reviews on Yelp, contributing to a 4.86/5 overall rating, and has earned multiple awards, including "Best of Tutors.com" for 2018 and "People Love us on Yelp" for 2021. He has also served as jazz ensemble coach, trumpet teacher, masterclass instructor and jazz history lecturer for the New York Jazz Academy, Afro-Latin Jazz Academy of Music, New York Ensemble Classes, the Lyceum Kennedy International School, Jubilee Enrichment Programs, Jazz Empowers and the Gramercy Brass Orchestra of New York. In addition, Jonathan served as a Graduate Part-Time Instructor at the University of Colorado, Boulder for six college semesters, 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.