

# JONATHAN SARAGA



"Jonathan Saraga is an excellent player with a lot to say and the means to say it very well."

-Gary Mortenson, *International Trumpet Guild*

[jonathansaraga.com](http://jonathansaraga.com)

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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.”

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 25 albums for various award-winning artists including the Eco-Music Big Band, Alex Heffron, and Sheddy Abraham to name a few. 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 would compete in the 2007 International Trumpet Guild Jazz Solo Competition, and win. Shortly after receiving his B.M. Jonathan competed again, this time as one of five finalists in the 2009 Carmine Caruso International Jazz Trumpet Competition. Upon starting the pursuit of his master's degree in 2010, he would travel to Kuala-Lumpur Malaysia to perform at the Anugerah Industri Muzik (AIM) awards, and once back in NYC, at the Blue Note Jazz Festival. Before receiving his Master of Music degree in 2011, Saraga became one of two trumpeters selected from an international pool to participate in the 2010 School for Improvisational Music summer intensive program.

A few years later, in 2012, Jonathan self-released his debut album, *First Vision*, at Smalls Jazz Club in NYC. *All About Jazz* called it "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." The album received air-play 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. 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 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 New York City, where Saraga is based, he performs and records as a featured musician with Festival of New Trumpet Music, having participated in two world premieres, and has played in ensembles led by highly acclaimed and/or Grammy-nominated/winning artists such as Steve Coleman, Henry Cole, Maria Schneider, Darcy James Argue, Orrin Evans, Josh Evans, Jimmy Greene, Tyshawn Sorey, Eric Bergen and the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra to name a few. He has performed as a sideman at Carnegie Hall, Joe's Pub, Symphony Space, the Barclay's Center, Smoke, Dizzy's Club Coco-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, which *Down Beat* magazine considers to be two of the best jazz clubs in the world.

Besides professing a passion and skill-set 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 Jeoffrey Ballet School. He has even co-choreographed plays and has played for Marc Jacobs fashion run-way 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), Yoga classes at Jivamukti, meditation classes for WeWork, 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 NYC Skirball Theater, to name only a few venues.

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 at the Gramercy Brass Band Camp, going on 7 years, Jonathan leads multi-instrument ensembles and group trumpet classes at public schools throughout the five boroughs as part of the Afro-Latin Jazz Academy, The Gramercy Brass Orchestra of New York, New York Ensemble Classes, the Lyceum Kennedy International School, Jubilee Enrichment Programs, and The New York Jazz Academy. He has served as full-time after-school music teacher at the Lyceum Kennedy French/Japanese School and most recently has finished 6 semesters of service as a Graduate Part-Time Instructor at the University of Colorado, Boulder, which included 3 semesters of ensemble coaching/conducting as well as 3 semesters of 100+ student History of Jazz lecture classes for non-majors. In addition to completing his D.M.A. in May of 2019, the recently hooded

Dr. Saraga was accepted to the 2019 Early Fall Musicians in Residence program at the Banff Center.  
Jonathan holds 3 degrees in Jazz Studies/Trumpet Performance: Bachelor of Music, Master of Music, and Doctor of Musical Arts.

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## SELECTED QUOTES

*"Saraga... is only in his mid-twenties, but plays with the wisdom and maturity of veterans more than twice his age. 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."*

**-Dan Bilawsky, All About Jazz**

*"I have long been an admirer of Jonathan's musicianship, both as an excellent instrumentalist and a thoughtful, creative jazz improviser. Jonathan embodies what I feel is the best approach to modern jazz music: a thorough grounding in the rich tradition of the music coupled with a restless, searching spirit that seeks to express the music of now."*

**-Jimmy Greene**

*"With a fresh approach to trumpet playing and improvisation, the emerging original voice of Jonathan Saraga is one that is indeed worthy of our attention."*

**-Todd Coolman**

*"Jonathan is a top-notch player. I have no doubt that he will be among the best players of his generation. He possesses the necessary ability both as a trumpeter and a musician to lead the way forward in the jazz community. When I listen to new young player, I look for a someone who has a progressive style that is anchored in the tradition of the music. Jonathan already fits that model."*

**-Scott Wendholt**

*"Jonathan Saraga has everything he needs to be a vital part of a new wave of trumpet players: Soul, intelligence, great technique and acute musical awareness. It's all here, in the unique writing and the inventive playing. Dig it!"*

**-Jim Rotondi**

*"Jonathan Saraga has been, from the first time I heard him play in 2005, a force. I never heard him take a solo, write a piece of music or, for that matter, have a conversation that wasn't pointed, serious and coming from a place of curiosity, interest and resolve. As a result, he has blossomed into an artist of real depth and the even better news is his relative youth -- who knows what he has yet to realize!"*

**-Pete Malinverni**

*"...every note, phrase, dynamic, articulation and small nuance comes from his inner being and is effortlessly presented to his listeners with in a purely creative performance."*

**- Bruce Chidester, The Trumpet Blog**

# JONATHAN SARAGA

## DISCOGRAPHY

### FIRST VISION

released Sept. 1st, 2012 at Smalls Jazz Club (NYC)

recorded on January 8th, 2012 at the Cutting Room Studios in New York, NY. All Compositions by Jonathan Saraga. All artwork by Jonathan Saraga. Produced by Jonathan Saraga.

Jonathan Saraga – trumpet/flugelhorn, Colin Gordon- alto saxophone, Peter Park – guitar, Jeff Dingler – bass, Gusten Rudolph - drums

"...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." - ALL ABOUT JAZZ

"...a rare blend of individuality and maturity." - ALL ABOUT JAZZ

"The music, all Saraga-penned, has an uncommon freshness coming from a 24 year-old artist who is well on his way to forming his own compositional voice." - ALL ABOUT JAZZ

"First Vision isn't the stuff of amateurs on the brink of musical maturity, it's a stand-up-and-take-notice offering." - ALL ABOUT JAZZ

"First Vision shouldn't be measured as a debut; it deserves to be judged only on its bountiful merits, which include stellar trumpet work, intriguing tunes and strong group chemistry." - ALL ABOUT JAZZ

"At times, Saraga's music can exhibit a wandering, nomadic, Klezmer-influenced sound that further cements the **(Dave) Douglas** connection via that trumpeter's work with **John Zorn's** flagship Masada." - ALL ABOUT JAZZ

"An excellent debut recording as a leader for Jonathan Saraga. Highly creative playing and writing throughout the CD, all done within a strong and fresh ensemble concept."  
- JON GORDON

"Jonathan has always impressed me and this recording helps lay a foundation for what I know will be a great career. Check it out!" - SCOTT WENDHOLT

"Jon's new recording is a splendid collection of originals which features some fine young musicians." - CHARLES BLENZIG



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### JOURNEY TO A NEW WORLD

label: Fresh Sound/New Talent

Recorded at Peter Karl Studios (NYC) on November 25th, 2015.

Mastered by Dave Darlington.

Jonathan Saraga - trumpet/compositions/arrangements

Remy Le Boeuf - alto

Aki Ishiguro - guitar

Chris Pattishall - piano/rhodes

Rick Rosato - bass

Kenneth Salters – drums

"Saraga is obviously very aware of the direction of jazz in his hometown of New York..." -Jazzwise UK

"There are no weak links in this band" -Sea of Tranquility

"The music pulls from its astonishing maturity and its capacity to suggest an singular experience but open and appropriate enough for the listener." -Jazz Magazine (France)

"familiar but also fresh; grounded but also hopeful." -Debbie Burke, Jazz Author

"assertive", "sharp line-up", "inventive" -Jazzwise UK

"Embodying a deft compositional approach and some first-rate musicianship, Saraga's *Journey* is just that: an opportunity to discover and explore some exciting musical territory, with a skilled and adventurous leader as a guide."

-All About Jazz

"A very focused and well-conceived album by Jonathan and his crew. His compositions display great personality and poise, with everyone in the band finding ways to channel the current sounds of modern jazz, using their various influences as a platform to delve into their own musical personalities."

-Miguel Zenon

"Saraga is a trumpeter with a singular vision that is motherloaded by a creative force but isn't a slave to it." – Midwest Record

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“Jonathan is a real improviser and has the technique to express his ideas fluently and with heart.”

- *Scott Lee*



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