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."

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 over 30 albums.

Also in 2005, 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. After receiving his Master of Music degree in 2011, Saraga became one of two trumpeters selected from an international pool to participate in the School for Improvisational Music summer intensive program.

The next year, 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 breaths "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, and Pulin4Jazz. A few years later, 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.) and has earned him multiple interviews and features with jazz author, Ruth Fischer.

Before completing his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 2019, Saraga headlined the first Caribbean International Jazz Festival in Les Cayes, Haiti in 2018 performing in front of thousands, and was selected for a residency in the 2019 Early Fall Musicians in Residence program at the Banff Center. In 2019, the newly hooded, Dr. Saraga made it to the finals in the New Jazz Works grant presented by Chamber Music America, and in 2020 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. Between 2020 and 2021, Saraga received two Downbeat Student Music Awards in the Outstanding Performance Undergraduate Category for Latin Group, and in the Graduate College Outstanding Arrangements category for Small Ensemble. He was also selected to participate in the BMI Jazz Composers Workshop, was accepted into Chashama's chaNorth Artist in Residence program and made it the finals in the Haleakala National Park Artist in Residence program. 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.

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 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 Valery Ponomarev Big Band, Manuel Valera's New Cuban Express Big Band, the Jihye Lee Jazz Orchestra, the Erica Seguine/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, which *Down Beat* magazine considers to be two of the best jazz clubs in the world.

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 Jeoffrey 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 and the Three Jewels, 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 NYU Skirball Theater, to name only a few venues. Jonathan also serves as an in-demand trumpeter with several acclaimed entertainment corporations such as Element Music, 45 Riots, and Elan Artists.

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, Jazz Empowers 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.