

DR. JONATHAN SARAGA

Trumpeter | Flugelhornist | Composer | Arranger | Educator | Producer | Doctor of Musical Arts
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Dr. Jonathan Saraga is a trumpeter, flugelhornist, composer, arranger, producer, educator and Doctor of Musical Arts based out of New York City.

His trumpet playing earned him first-place in the 2007 International Trumpet Guild Jazz Trumpet Solo Competition and the opportunity to compete as one of 5 finalists in the 2009 Carmine Caruso International Jazz Trumpet Solo Competition. He's received a total of 2 Downbeat Student Music Awards for his trumpet playing, one in the 2020 Outstanding Performance Undergraduate Category for Latin Group, and one in the 2021 Graduate College Outstanding Arrangements for Small Ensemble category. He was 1 of 2 trumpeters to receive a callback for the Juilliard Artist Diploma in 2014, 1 of 5 to make it to final round of auditions for the GRAMMY-winning Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra's 4th Trumpet Chair in 2020, as well as 1 of 2 finalists to compete for both the U.S. Navy Band Commodores' and U.S. Air Force Academy Band's jazz/commercial trumpet vacancies in 2021.

Saraga's composing and arranging work has earned him many accolades as well, including finalist status in the 2019 Chamber Music America New Jazz Works grant competition, semi-finalist status in the 2021 Unsigned Only Music Competition (12% of 10,000 entries), 5 semi-finalist nominations in the International Songwriting Competition 2 years in a row (2016 and 2017) as well as an honorable mention selection in the 2017 competition (1% of 16,000 entries). He was among 19 up-and-coming jazz composers selected from a global pool to receive a Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award in 2016, among 16 to receive a commission from the International Society of Jazz Arrangers and Composers in 2020 and among 30 selected to participate in the 2020 and 2021 BMI Jazz Composers Workshops. In 2023, he earned finalist status in the Amsonia & Hermes Music International Composition Contest and in 2024, was commissioned by the Keio Light Music Society of Japan to compose a jazz orchestra arrangement for their annual Yamano Big Band Contest held in Tokyo.

Jonathan's overall musicianship earned him invitations to 2 internationally selective intensive programs, one being the 2011 School for Improvisational Music's Summer Intensive, and the other being the 2015 Banff Center's Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music. It also earned him participation in 2 internationally selective residency programs, one being the 2019 Banff Early Fall Musicians in Residence program and the other being the 2021 Chashama's chaNorth Artist in Residence. Additional residency related accolades include making the finals in the 2021 Haleakala National Park Artist in Residence program and onto the waitlist of the Millay Colony of the Art's Core Residency program for the 2nd half of 2021. It earned him the opportunity to pursue a 3-year Doctor of Musical Arts degree with full-scholarship/paid instructorship from 2016-2019, as well as selection by the Recording Academy for their New York Chapter in 2022.

Saraga has also garnered accolades as a teaching artist, and was selected to present at the International Society for Improvised Music conference at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music in Melbourne, Australia, and at the Association for Popular Music Education conference at Edinburgh Napier University in Scotland, both in 2020. He was also invited to present his research at the Jazz Education Network's annual conference in 2024, and has received grants from United States Artists, the University of Colorado Boulder, 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. Dr. Saraga has appeared on 30 studio albums, including 2 under his own name (for Blue Truffle Music and Fresh Sound record labels), and can be heard/seen in over 250 YouTube videos. His scholarly work has engaged with individuals in over 500 cities, nearly 70 countries and just short of 100 different universities world-wide, and he has been actively performing, recording and teaching throughout Europe, Asia, the Caribbean, Canada and the U.S. since 2006.

Some of the notable group he's played with include 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 Josh Evans Big Band, the David Berger 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 Jason Marshall Big Band, the Dan Pugash Big Band featuring Nicole Zuraitis, the BMI Jazz Orchestra, the Samuel Torres Big Band, the Sam Blakeslee Large Group, the Miho Hazama Jazz Orchestra, the Jihye Lee Jazz Orchestra the Migiwa Miyajima Jazz Orchestra and Brass Against, as well as ensembles led by Zee Avi, Erich Bergen, Tyshawn Sorey, Steve Coleman and Henry Cole.