

Jonathan Armstrong is a musician, composer, and educator serving as the Director of Jazz Studies at Idaho State University. He moved to Pocatello in 2015 after living and working as a professional musician in Los Angeles for nine years. Jonathan has established a creative and dynamic career as a band-leader, performer, contemporary composer, and innovative educator.

In Los Angeles he performed with musical luminaries Vinny Golia (avant-garde jazz musician), Bennie Maupin (saxophonist who performed and recorded with Miles Davis), Vincent Gallo (indie filmmaker and songwriter), and Mike Barone (arranger and composer for "The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson). He co-founded the jazz quartet Slumgum and released three critically acclaimed albums. Jonathan has performed across the United States, in Japan, Austria, and Germany on saxophone, flute, clarinet, bass, guitar, piano, drums, and electronic sampler. He has also performed on countless recording sessions, concerts, and festivals.

As a composer, Jonathan is passionate about collaborating with artists from other disciplines, writing music for theater, dance, and film. He scored the theatrical productions Exhibit A, Homo Economicus, and Record of Light, the dance performance Space Opera with the Heidi Duckler Dance Company, and worked on the animated film Tentacles of Dimension. He has been commissioned to compose pieces for five different premieres by L.A. chamber ensembles, and to write an original piece for the Idaho State University Chamber Choir which will be premiered on April 20th, 2018.

In addition to his work as a professional musician, Armstrong is an innovative educator who has established several creative music programs. He founded jazz programs at three Los Angeles based educational non-profit organizations: Heart of Los Angeles, Plaza De La Raza, and the Funk Orchestra program at Harmony Project. He implemented a high school jazz orchestral program through Los Angeles City College, ran the instrumental music program at a middle school, and taught for California Arts Partnership Summer Academy and the Oakwood School Academy of Creative Education. In every context, Jonathan encourages students to develop their own unique creative voice by stressing original composition and improvisational technique.

He has taken this same philosophy to Idaho State University, where he has been working to curate a professional music scene by setting up unique collaborations for his student ensembles. They play varied musical styles from around the world and regularly share the stage with established creative musicians. For each student performance, Jonathan arranges music specific to the group. His students have performed with the Kirtan artist Sheela Bringi and songwriter Clinton Patterson, the rock/jazz trio Evil Genius, Seattle-based jazz group Industrial Revelation, Cathlene Pineda quartet, Phoenix-based guitarist Jeff Libman, improvising artist Art Lande, local Kuwaiti student musicians performing traditional Arabic music, Oakland funk band Howard Wiley & Extra Nappy, and the internationally touring string trio Time for Three.

Jonathan Armstrong has composed and arranged dozens of new pieces for ISU ensembles, created a live score for a showing of the 1920s movie Nosferatu, founded a summer Creative Jazz Academy, and guest conducted the ISU Women's Choir. He has performed both as a guest soloist and ensemble member with the Idaho State Civic Symphony. He frequently works alongside local high school and middle school music educators on developing dynamic jazz pedagogy. He has completed over 20 school visits and worked as a clinician or judge at numerous ensemble festivals. Jonathan offers clinics at Brigham Young Universities both in Provo and Rexburg, Utah Valley University, College of Southern Idaho, and Utah State University.

Jonathan continues to cultivate his career as a performer and composer in the intermountain west. He is a core member of Grouptet, a jazz ensemble led by the drummer Kobie Watkins (who has performed and toured with Sonny Rollins and Branford Marsalis). Jonathan has performed and toured extensively with the Grouptet and recorded an album of Watkins' music, due to be released in the summer of 2018. Between all these projects, he enjoys hiking in Pocatello and exploring the area with his wife.