

JONATHAN CRAYFORD

BIOGRAPHY



Born in 1964, New Zealand pianist Jonathan Crayford began playing piano at the age of 3, studying with Sister Henry of Sacred Heart convent. At 18 he was composing music for films, the first of which were the documentary 'Making Utu' and the feature film 'Pallet on the Floor' along with Bruno Lawrence.

At the age of 26 he moved to New York to immerse himself in the jazz scene and following a short while studying at the Julliard school of music began playing with notable musicians including Kurt Rosenwinkel, David Binney, Groove Collective, Mambo Macoco, Jay Rodriguez, Bill Ware and many others.

His work spans many different genres of jazz, funk, and in some cases classical disciplines, as well as Latin jazz in regional styles, including, but not limited to Cuban, Brazilian and Spanish dialects. He is considered one of New Zealand's foremost pianists who is certainly not afraid to venture into different genres.

In 2009 he moved to Paris to work on his own 2-year project concerning the life of Evariste Galois – the genius French mathematician for which he received the Edwin Carr Scholarship. Whilst there he assisted David in the creation of several projects including Questlove's Afropicks which featured music of Fela Kuti played by Tony Allen, Questlove, Macy Gray, Amp Fiddler, Mamani Keita (Mali). In Cuba he worked with Bobby Carcasses and in Brazil with Alda Rezende, Caito Mercones and Miguel Wisneke and with other world music artists.

His 2014 trio Album, 'Dark Light' was nominated for the Best New Zealand Jazz Album and the 2016 follow up, 'East West Moon' took out the award in that category. His other achievements include nominations and best scores for several feature films and theatre production.

Jonathan is also an accomplished bass player. On his 2006 release 'Big Foot' you can hear him playing a range of other instruments as well. Though primarily known for his work as a pianist, Jonathan is a talented multi-instrumentalist.

In 2017 Jonathan scored 'Pork Pie' directed by Matt Murphy.

In 2018 he was commissioned by the NZ International Festival of the Arts to produce, compose and arrange a programme of classical works featuring improvisation as an essential element. For this Crayford arranged and reinterpreted the works of Mahler, Albinoni, Barber, Ravel and Satie with himself and Nathan Haines as featured soloists. He named the project 'Adagio'. During that year he also performed a Solo Concert Tour (22 concerts) across NZ bringing a Steinway D Grand piano and a crew with him.

2019 started with the arrangement of the Gospel project for the Salvation Army Offering campaign with Nathan Haines and other outstanding NZ musicians. Later on, Jonathan was invited as a feature artist at the Adelaide Jazz Festival in Australia. He was also commissioned to arrange music for the APRA Silver Scroll awards and performed a tour of Australia. Recently, Jonathan Crayford has been working on the scores for the feature film 'Lowdown Dirty Criminals' and 'Garden of Evil' - a feature documentary concerning the destruction of the Amazonian rain forest. Currently he is working on a new Solo piano project due to be released on Rattle records and also scoring a new TV Series 'Polynesian Panthers'.



PRAISE OF CRAYFORD'S WORK:

'A huge talent, Jonathan is a true original who explores creative musical opportunities, when or wherever they might arise. I consider him to be one of the very finest creative musical talents to have ever come from Aotearoa.' **Mike Nock, ONZM., Mmus.**

'The title track of pianist Jonathan Crayford's latest album 'Dark Light' is a stunning meditation in colour and tone. It establishes its bearings and then heads into the unknown - the piano probing and searching sometimes pensive at others strident and rambling. It's a towering composition on an album that clocks in at a perfect 45 minutes and leaves you gasping at its beauty, richness and assuredness. Crayford has always threatened to record something special to match his obvious talents as a composer. Dark Light is it and is as good an album you're likely to hear this year.' **Mike Alexander**

'He's an artist embedded so deeply within his music that his persona reflects in those terms. It's as if he were the embodiment of sonic shapes and forms.' **John Fenton jazzlocal32.com**

'Jonathan has been a constant source of inspiration to me for the last 20 years. His recent solo piano tour of New Zealand, which I was fortunate to hear live on one occasion and through his archival recordings, is some of the most beautiful and organic music I have heard from him to date. Jonathan is, for me, New Zealand's greatest improviser and composer. His vision is to integrate these two forces and I eagerly await this new music.' **Barney McAll, Musician / Composer**

'This is the kind of piano I totally relate to: exploratory, thoughtful, soulful, focused. Those qualities are all sort of contradictory, or at least contrasting, which is why this kind of work is meaningful: because it is multi-dimensional.' Thomas Conrad critic for Jazz Times *'Rattle enjoys a very creative and productive relationship with pianist/composer Jonathan Crayford. Jonathan is not only one of Rattle's finest composer/performers, he is one of the most significant voices in contemporary New Zealand music culture. He is also one of the most driven [inspiringly unstoppable] of all Rattle's collaborating artists, evinced by his undaunted commitment to touring the country with a 9-foot concert Steinway last year!'* **Steve Garden, Label Manager, Rattle Records**