

RIISING NEW YORK TRUMPET PLAYER/COMPOSER JOHN LAKE SET TO RELEASE AMBITIOUS DEBUT *SEVEN ANGELS* ON JUNE 26



"Trumpeter John Lake presents a striking album introducing his multi-talents as composer, arranger and soloist. The outstanding program of unique originals and transformed classics showcases a dynamic band with first-rate soloists sharing a conceptual vision, giving a remarkably seasoned sound to this fresh new project." – *Grammy-nominated trombonist, bandleader and arranger John Fedchock*

For Immediate Release — ***Seven Angels***, due out June 26, 2020, is the sensational debut recording by New York trumpet player and composer **John Lake**. An up-and-coming instrumentalist known for his large-ensemble and session playing, Lake puts a bold foot forward with this independent release, a diverse mix of contemporary originals and modern arrangements of select jazz classics.

Since moving to Brooklyn from the Midwest seven years ago, Lake has gained a reputation as a lead trumpeter of formidable prowess. But he always had plans to grow his own voice as a player/composer. "***Seven Angels***, to me, represents this idea that we each have a circle of 'guardian angels' guiding us in our life's journey. They could be your artistic influences, your teachers, an encouraging family member, or even, in an abstract sense, some greater force watching out for you, providing opportunities or ideas when the time is right. I really believe there's a right time and place for everything, and felt that this collection of compositions and musical relationships I'd developed needed to be shared."

"Each song has its own story as it relates to my time learning to play in New York City, being influenced not only by my midwestern roots, but also by the stunning array of musicians now surrounding me." The title track evokes a calm assuredness, a "cautious optimism" as Lake puts it. "I wrote this around the time that I really felt that I was starting to have something to say...that I knew who I was as a composer and performer. It's cooled out, it's alternately dark and simmering, without being too rowdy. I love to work in subtlety."

Lake's love of hard-bop is represented in part by "Pearls Of The Tartar," an original composition dedicated to Horace Silver. "Horace died in 2014, right after I started playing in New York. I loved that he always featured the trumpet in his groups, and wrote beautifully unique tunes with such grooving simplicity. I tried to capture some of his trademark funkiness and fantastic, swinging part-writing." Pianist Steven Feifke's introduction sets a mysterious tone, quickly falling into a swirling tumult of crashing waves, before the band clears the air with a quirky, grooving affirmation of mambo swing. Of his tenor saxophonist foil, Lake says, "Paul Jones just has the most incredible, deep sense of sound and phrasing. It's truly a joy to play melodies with somebody who listens like he does. I knew he would grab the counter-lines on this tune perfectly, putting his vibe on it so that it's better than what was on the paper."

Lake also pays tribute to tenor saxophone icon Joe Henderson with his sextet arrangement of "A Shade Of Jade," adding the blistering alto saxophone voice of Michael Thomas to the ensemble. "I had a few tunes that I wanted to do as a sextet, again, going back to my love of horn bands like Horace's, and also Art Blakey, and Michael was the perfect addition. Joe Henderson's compositions have always captivated me – he uses such luminous and colorful harmonies, and it was natural to feature the saxophonists on that tune. I had an Afro-Latin composition of my own, 'Signal Changes,' that really needed a third voice to make the melody sparkle." Veteran drummer Jeff Davis commands the time with authority, while Marcos Varela's buoyant bass tones support the off-set melody from the horns.

Despite his nostalgia for hard-driving post-bop of the 1960s and '70s, Lake is not interested in merely recreating the past. Perhaps the most engaging compositions on the recording are a quartet of modern originals, starting with the first track, "The Bet," inspired by (and named after) the short story by Anton Chekhov. "I was sitting inside one day, just a couple weeks before the recording took place, and I knew the record needed something modern: a vaulting melody, lots of rhythmic agitation, complex shifting harmonies...but, it had to tell a story, to have an arc. I had been putting off writing this song, because I was intimidated by what it needed to be, and I felt sort of trapped in my apartment, self-sequestered, that I could not leave until I wrote this song. Then I thought of that Chekhov story, about self-imprisonment, and a melody started to crystallize for me. So, finally I sat at the piano, and in a couple hours I had the entire composition."

Other originals include the ethereal "Nightwatch," the breakbeat-inspired "cloud_down," and the prepared chaos of "Whelmed," each of which the sidemen interpret with laudable grit and finesse. Of the sidemen, Lake says, "I'm so happy with the band on this album. They are such capable musicians, each of them, to navigate all these diverse styles of music. They're not content to simply execute what I wrote. They push the compositions to a higher level, and also push me beyond what I thought was possible for my own playing. These are some of the most talented players of our generation here in New York, and I'm honored to have them on the album."

But Lake wasn't always this optimistic about his future in jazz music. Before moving to New York in 2013, he struggled with being on what felt like the fringes of the jazz community. "Going to jazz school is a singular experience – even though I went to two of them! You're learning the

building blocks, but sometimes you feel cut off from putting them into practice. I received an excellent education, had some incredible teachers and relationships, and I wouldn't exchange those for anything. But living in smaller cities like Cincinnati and Denver, and being in school all day, I did feel like I was missing out on the 'jazz life' of bigger-city musicians. Going to different gigs every other night, seeing the greats play all over town, doing tours; that sort of thing. And people told me 'New York is too crowded; you'll never get work.' That couldn't have been further from the truth."

Since moving to New York, Lake says he's found a community of passionate artists who are not only deeply skilled as musicians, but who generously donate their time and energy for the common cause; a love of music. "I can put a session together tomorrow, with top-rate musicians who I maybe haven't even met. Everybody just wants to play. The environment is so positive towards making music – it's like living at a summer jazz camp, every single day. I've been so inspired by seeing people manifest their dreams here, I really feel that the time for me to stand up and introduce myself is now." And if this ambitious release is any indication, he'll have much more to say.

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