

Bio

Composer and trombonist Michael Dessen creates highly interactive, improvisatory music and collaborates with leading artists, while also working as a university professor to expand institutional spaces for cultural innovation and exchange. His teachers include Yusef Lateef, George E. Lewis, and Anthony Davis, and he is a Professor at the University of California, Irvine, where he co-founded an MFA and PhD program in Integrated Composition, Improvisation and Technology (ICIT), served for four years as chair of the Department of Music, and is currently Director of the Gassmann Electronic Music Studios and Jazz Program Coordinator.

Education

PhD in Music, Critical Studies/Experimental Practices, University of California, San Diego 2003
 • Committee: George E. Lewis (chair), Anthony Davis, Nancy Guy, George Lipsitz, Bennetta Jules-Rosette
 • Dissertation: *Decolonizing Art Music: Scenes from the Late Twentieth-Century United States*

Master of Music, Jazz Composition, University of Massachusetts, Amherst 1996
 • Composition studies with Yusef Lateef

Bachelor of Music, Trombone Performance, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, New York 1989
 • Graduation with Highest Honors and Performers Certificate

Academic Positions

University of California, Irvine, Trevor School of the Arts, Department of Music 2006-present
 Professor, 2019-present
 Associate Professor, 2011-2019
 Assistant Professor, 2006-2011

Amherst College, Amherst, MA 2006
 Lecturer, Black Studies and Music Departments

Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 2002-2006
 Visiting Assistant Professor of Music, 2004-2006
 Adjunct Assistant Professor of Music, 2002-2004

University of California, San Diego 1998-2001
 Associate in Music

University of Massachusetts, Amherst 1996-1997
 Lecturer

Composition Awards and Commissions

New Music USA Project Award 2016
 To record *Somewhere in the Upstream* with the Michael Dessen Trio

Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute 2013
 To compose *Slippages*, read by the La Jolla Symphony with conductor Steven Schick

Fromm Foundation Composition Commission 2012
 To compose *Somewhere in the Upstream* for the Michael Dessen Trio

Chamber Music America New Jazz Works Award 2011
 To compose *Resonating Abstractions* for the Michael Dessen Trio

Selected Recordings

Digibone Forest, solo trombone and computer (Accretions Records) 2019

Somewhere In The Upstream, featuring Chris Tordini and Dan Weiss (Clean Feed Records) 2018

Resonating Abstractions, featuring Chris Tordini and Dan Weiss (Clean Feed Records) 2014

Forget the Pixel, featuring Chris Tordini and Dan Weiss (Clean Feed Records) 2011

Between Shadow and Space, featuring Chris Tordini and Tyshawn Sorey (Clean Feed Records) 2008

Lineal, featuring Vijay Iyer, Mark Dresser, Susie Ibarra, Terry Jenoure, Bob Weiner and Jorge Roeder 2007

Sideperson recordings with Yusef Lateef, Mark Dresser, Anthony Davis, Marty Ehrlich, many others 1996-present

Selected Telematic Projects

- Changing Tides 3 2023
- Sites: Seoul, South Korea and San Diego, CA
 - Role: Co-director, composer, performer
 - Musicians: Jean Oh, Aram Lee, Ju Hee Go, JoonSu Kim, Donghyeok Kwak, Wilfrido Terrazas, Michael Dessen, Joshua White, Mark Dresser, Gerald Cleaver
- Widening the Embrace: A Reduced Carbon Footprint Concert 2023
- Sites: Brooklyn, NY and San Diego, CA
 - Role: Co-director, composer, performer
 - Musicians: Fay Victor, Ingrid Laubrock, Patricia Brennan, Michael Dessen, Joshua White, Mark Dresser, Gerald Cleaver
- Changing Tides 2 2020
- Sites: Seoul, South Korea and San Diego, CA
 - Role: Co-director, composer, performer
 - Musicians: Bae Il Dong, Jungpyo Lee, Yoon Jeong Heo, Jean Oh, Aram Lee, Min Wang Hwang, Bo Sul Kim, Stephanie Richards, Wilfrido Terrazas, Joshua White, Mark Dresser, Michael Dessen
- Tele-Espacios VI, 2019 2019
- Sites: Manizales, Colombia (within the Festival Internacional de la Imagen) and Irvine, CA
 - Roles: Co-director, composer, performer
 - Musicians: Ensemble Música Contemporánea Universidad de Caldas directed by Yovanny Betancur, Wilfrido Terrazas, Juan David Rubio, Michael Dessen
- Interconnections for Peace 2018
- Sites: Seoul, South Korea; New York, NY; and San Diego, CA
 - Roles: Co-director, composer, performer.
 - Musicians: Yoon Jeong Heo, Jean Oh, A Ram Lee, Min Wang Hwang, and Ji Young Yi; Yoon Sun Choi, Jane Ira Bloom, Matthias Ziegler, David Taylor, Satoshi Takeishi, and Sarah Weaver; Mark Dresser, Nicole Mitchell, Stephanie Richards, Michael Dessen
- Spooky Interaction, Lesson II, by George E. Lewis 2016
- Sites: Pittsburgh, PA and Irvine, CA
 - Roles: Co-producer, performer
 - Musicians: Geri Allen, George E. Lewis, Nicole Mitchell, Francis Wong, Michael Dessen
- Virtual Tour: A Reduced Carbon Footprint Concert Series 2013
- Sites: San Diego, CA in duo (3 concerts) with Zurich, Switzerland; Stony Brook, NY; Amherst, MA.
 - Roles: Co-director, composer performer
 - Musicians: Mark Dresser, Nicole Mitchell, Myra Melford, Michael Dessen, Jane Ira Bloom, Ray Anderson, Min Xiao Fen, Matt Wilson, Sarah Weaver, Gerry Hemingway, Matthias Ziegler, Marty Ehrlich, Jason Robinson, Bob Weiner
- Performer, composer, and/or producer on nearly 40 telematic concerts 2007-present

Publications

"Thinking Telematically: Improvising Music Worlds Under COVID and Beyond." *Jazz Perspectives*, June 8, 2022.

"Networked Music Performance: An Introduction for Musicians and Educators." Featured on the *SmartMusic Music Educators Blog*, September 2020.

"New Polyphonies: Score Streams, Improvisation and Telepresence." *Leonardo Music Journal*, v.20, November/December 2010.

"Asian Americans and Creative Music Legacies." *Critical Studies in Improvisation / Etudes Critiques en Improvisation*, 1:3, 2006.

"Improvising in a Different Clave: Steve Coleman and AfroCuba de Matanzas." In *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*, ed. Ajay Heble and Daniel Fischlin. Wesleyan University Press, 2004.

Preface to *Yusef Lateef's Songbook*, FANA Publications, 2005.

Selected Conference Activity

"Puentes Telemáticos / Telematic Bridges: Experiments in intercultural, telepresent and creative music pedagogy," co-presented with Juan David Rubio, *NowNet Arts Conference*, online, 2021.

Panelist/presenter, "Music Enabling Technology," *2021 Network Performing Arts Production Workshop*, online, 2021.

Panelist/presenter, "Flying Toward the Sound: Geri Allen's Work in Telematics," with Mount Allen, George E. Lewis, Nicole Mitchell, Francis Wong and Aaron Johnson. *Feed the Fire: A Cyber Symposium in Honor of Geri Allen*, University of Pittsburgh, 2020.

"Intimate Distance and a Wide Beat: Reflections on Telematic Music," *NowNet Arts Conference*, Stony Brook University, 2018.

Presentation on recent creative work in telematic music, *International Society for Electronic Arts (ISEA)* conference, Universidad de Caldas, Manizales, Colombia, 2017.

Panelist (remote), "The State of Telematic Art," *Refest 2.0* at NYU, New York, NY, 2017.

"Jazz and Telematics," co-presented with Mark Dresser, *Jazz Educators Network Conference*, San Diego, CA, 2015.

"Institutionalizing "new territories"? Jazz, Improvisation, Race, and Power in Higher Education." Invited colloquium presentation, University of Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2007.

Roundtable organizer and chair, "Improvisation, transculturalism, and social change: Asian American Creative Music and the San Francisco Bay Area," with Deborah Wong, George Yoshida, Mark Izu, Donna Lee Kwon, John Carlos Perea, and Jason Robinson. *American Studies Association* annual meeting, Oakland, CA, 2006.

South Asia Humanities Conference, panel on South Asian and African American music with Paul Gilroy, Arjun Appadurai, Vyjayanthi Rao, Rudresh Mahanthappa and Vijay Iyer. Yale University Center for British Art, 2003.

"'Downtown,' Improvisation and Cultural Mobility." *Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology*, Detroit, 2001.

"Cross-Cultural Experimentalism: Grupo Afro-Cuba de Matanzas and Steve Coleman's Mystic Rhythm Society." *Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology*, Toronto, Ontario, 2000.

"Experimentación e identidad cultural en una colaboración musical," *Simposio Sobre Cultura Cubana: Identidad y Nacionalidad*, Santiago, Cuba, 2000.

Co-organizer, "Improvising Across Borders: An Inter-disciplinary Symposium on Improvised Music." UC San Diego, 1999.

Courses at UC Irvine

Graduate courses

- *Contemporary Ensemble*: Medium-sized ensemble creating/performing original works
- *Critical Studies in Music*: Theoretical seminar introducing scholarly literature from diverse fields
- *Networked Music Performance*: Practical seminar on multi-site musical performance via internet
- *Improvisation*: Seminar on open forms of improvisation
- *Experiments in Telematic Music*: Inter-campus seminar on creating music for networked, telepresent environments
- *Creative Practices, Composition*: Seminars and lessons on integrated composition, improvisation and technology

Undergraduate courses

- *Improvisation*: Intro for upper-division music majors combining practical and theoretical work
- *Jazz combo*: Small group jazz performance
- *Introduction to Music*: Large lecture (up to 400 students), also offered online, on diverse topics
- *Jazz Trombone*: Individual lessons for jazz trombone majors
- *Musicianship*: Aural skills sequence for music majors
- *Composition and Advanced Composition*: Intro class and individual lessons
- *Fundamentals*: Music theory basics

Awards at UC Irvine

Distinguished Faculty Award for Teaching

2022-23

Campus-level award given to one tenured faculty per year by the UC Irvine Academic Senate

Intercultural Education for Youth

Puentes Telemáticos / Telematic Bridges, Co-director	2017-present
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Links high school music students from Santa Ana, CA and Manizales, Colombia in hybrid/telepresent classroom for bilingual summer course on music/technology• Uses advanced networking tools (Sonobus, JackTrip) for telematic performance and improvisation workshops, and a collaborative DAW (Soundtrap) for group composition and production projects• 1-week courses in 2017 and 2018, 3-week courses in 2021 and 2022• Expanding to year-round, bi-weekly program beginning in summer 2023	

Service at UC Irvine

Jazz Program Coordinator	as of July 2023
Director of Gassmann Electronic Music Studios and Series	2021-present
Core graduate faculty, Integrated Composition, Improvisation and Technology (ICIT)	2008-present
Department Chair (Robert and Marjorie Rawlins Chair of Music)	2015-2019
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, Trevor School of the Arts	2014-2015
Co-designed MFA and PhD in Integrated Composition, Improvisation and Technology (ICIT)	2008, 2014
UCI Academic Planning Group member	2021-2022
Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Music	2020, 2011-2012
Networked Music Support Supervisor (Pandemic Lockdown), Department of Music	2020-2021
UCI Academic Senate Council on Faculty Welfare, Diversity, and Academic Freedom	2014-2015
UCI representative, systemwide University Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity	2014-2015
Advisory Board Member, UC Institute for Research in the Arts (UCIRA)	2012-2015
Member, UCI Salary Equity Committee	2014-2015
Panelist, Southern California Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education	2013, 2014
UCI Academic Senate Committee on International Education, chair and member	2011-2012, 2010-2011
School of the Arts Faculty Research Grants Committee, chair and member	2011-2012, 2009-2011

Networked Music Consulting

Authored widely used documentation for networked music production	2013-2020
Consultant, California Jazz Conservatory	2020
Consultant residency, Seoul Institute of the Arts, Korea	2015
Consultant, Mary Lou Williams Cyber Symposium, directed by Geri Allen	2014
Consultant for startup Musicianlink	2008-2009