

Bio

Michael Dessen is a musician and educator based in Southern California. As a composer and trombonist, he specializes in highly interactive, improvisatory music, and his work also includes telematic production, intermedia collaboration, research/writing, university teaching, and academic-community partnerships. He is a Professor at the University of California, Irvine, where he co-founded a PhD program in Integrated Composition, Improvisation and Technology (ICIT), and currently serves as Chair of the Music Department.

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, Claire 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

Selected Telematic Music Projects

- 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 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
- Tele-Espacios Activos X 2023
- Sites: Manizales, Colombia (within the Festival Internacional de la Imagen) and Irvine, CA
 - Role: Co-director, composer, performer
 - Musicians/artists: Mario Humberto Valencia, Oscar Villota, Tata Ceballos, Michael Dessen, Chieh Huang, Lisa Yoshida, William Fastenow, Rebecca Larkin, Shivangi Cancean

Changing Tides 2	2020
- Sites: Seoul, South Korea and San Diego, CA - Role: Co-director, composer, performer - Musicians/artists: 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/artists: Ensemble Música Contemporánea Universidad de Caldas directed by Yovanny Betancur, Wilfrido Terrazas, Juan David Rubio, Michael Dessen, Mario Humberto Valencia	
Interconnections for Peace	2018
- Sites: Seoul, South Korea; New York, NY; and San Diego, CA - Roles: Co-director, composer, performer. - Musicians/artists: 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 40+ telematic concerts	2007-present

Selected Recordings

<i>Digibone Forest</i> , solo trombone and computer (Accretions Records)	2019
<i>Somewhere In The Upstream</i> , featuring Chris Tordini and Dan Weiss (Clean Feed Records)	2018
<i>Resonating Abstractions</i> , featuring Chris Tordini and Dan Weiss (Clean Feed Records)	2014
<i>Forget the Pixel</i> , featuring Chris Tordini and Dan Weiss (Clean Feed Records)	2011
<i>Between Shadow and Space</i> , featuring Chris Tordini and Tyshawn Sorey (Clean Feed Records)	2008
<i>Lineal</i> , 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

Composition Awards

New Music USA Project Award to record <i>Somewhere in the Upstream</i>	2016
Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute award to compose <i>Slippages</i>	2013
Fromm Foundation Composition Commission to compose <i>Somewhere in the Upstream</i>	2012
Chamber Music America New Jazz Works Award to compose <i>Resonating Abstractions</i>	2011

Creative/Educational Grants and Partnerships

Cauces Sónicos: Creative Music Making Across the Borderlands	2025-27
- Co-directed with Prof. Wilfrido Terrazas (UC San Diego), and funded by a two year, \$150k Latino Studies Research Project award from the UC Alianza MX Initiative - Includes creative collaborations with professional musicians to create new works, inter-campus courses, and community workshops	
Fulbright residency, Bogotá, Colombia	2023
- Three-week residency sponsored by the US Fulbright Specialist Program and the Jazz emphasis in the Faculty of Arts at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana - Taught and lectured on jazz, and consulted on networked music technologies	

- Co-directed intercultural, bilingual summer course on creative music and technology
- Linked high school music students from Santa Ana, CA and Manizales, Colombia in a hybrid/telepresent classroom via university labs

Publications

- "On Not Getting Over It," in *The Improviser's Classroom: Pedagogies for Cocreative Worldmaking*, edited by Daniel Fischlin and Mark Lomanno. Temple University Press, 2025.
- "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 Conferences

- "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.
- "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.

Awards and Affiliations at UC Irvine

UCI Academic Senate Distinguished Faculty Award for Teaching	2022-23
Claire Trevor School of the Arts Faculty Service Award	2024-25
Connected Learning Lab, affiliated faculty	2023-present
Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, affiliated faculty	2018-present
Alec Glasser Center for the Power of Music and Social Change, affiliated faculty	2025-present

Selected Service at UC Irvine

Department Chair (Robert and Marjorie Rawlins Chair of Music)	2015-2019, 2023-present
Jazz Program Coordinator	2023-present
Director of Gassmann Electronic Music Studios	2021-present
Core PhD/MFA faculty, Integrated Composition, Improvisation and Technology (ICIT)	2008-present
UCI Academic Planning Group, member	2021-2022
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, Claire Trevor School of the Arts	2014-2015
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
UCI Academic Senate Committee on International Education, chair and member	2011-2012, 2010-2011

Courses Taught at UC Irvine

Graduate courses

- *Creative Practices, Composition*: Seminars and lessons on integrated composition, improvisation and technology
- *Critical Studies in Music*: Theoretical seminar introducing scholarly literature from diverse fields
- *Contemporary Ensemble*: Medium-sized ensemble creating/performing original works
- *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 taught with Mark Dresser (UCSD)

Undergraduate courses

- *Improvisation*: Introductory course for upper-division music majors combining practical and theoretical work
- *Introduction to Music*: Large GE lecture course on diverse topics
- *Musicianship*: Aural skills sequence for music majors
- *Composition and Advanced Composition*: Intro class and individual lessons
- *Jazz Orchestra*: Directed jazz big band (AY 2023-24)
- *Jazz Combos*: Small group jazz performance
- *Jazz Trombone*: Individual lessons for jazz trombone majors
- *Fundamentals*: Music theory basics

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