

**MIKE VARGAS CV** September 2015

Composer/Improviser: piano, percussion, electronics and small instruments

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## OVERVIEW

Mike Vargas began playing music in 1959. Since then, his curiosity has led him through many contexts, from cocktail lounges in Indonesia to underground clubs in New York, from the Kennedy Center to cancer wards, from Grimm's fairy tales to Playback Theater. In addition to his ongoing pure music work, Vargas started specializing in music for dance in 1978, and since then has composed well over 100 commissioned dance scores. He has also worked extensively as an accompanist, improvising music for many styles of dance for 35 years. During the last 15 years, Vargas has been working closely with dancer Nancy Stark Smith, teaching and performing in workshops and festivals. His music (with and without dance) has been heard across the USA, in Canada, Europe, South America and Australia. He has published two articles in *Contact Quarterly*, one on composition (2003) and one on improvisation and collaboration (2013). Vargas has taught people of all ages about music and improvisation in public schools, colleges and universities, and privately. He has released nine CD's of his music.

## RECENT EXPERIENCE

### Teaching and Music in Colleges/Universities

2006-2015: full-time faculty Smith College dance department

2003-2005: Barnard College, NY

1996-1999: University of Colorado, CO

1994-1998: Naropa University, CO

### Co-teaching and Music for Workshops with Nancy Stark Smith

2013/2015: Rennes, France; Geneva, Switzerland; Bates Dance Festival, ME; iDance Festival, Taipei; Earthdance, MA; Bari, Italy; HfMDK Frankfurt, Germany; Flow Festival, Warsaw;

1998-2013: Malaga, Spain; Lisbon, Portugal; Berkeley, CA; Buenos Aires, Argentina; La Floresta, Uruguay; San Francisco, CA; Moscow, Russia; Chicago, IL; Ormskirk, England; Stolzenhagen, Germany; Istanbul and Uchisar, Turkey; Vancouver, Canada; London, England; Earthdance, MA; Montreal, Canada; Banyoles, Spain; Amsterdam, Netherlands; Innsbruck, Austria; Washington, DC; Melbourne, Australia; Sydney, Australia; Apuglia, Italy; Florence, Italy; Toronto, Canada; Rochester, NY; Freiburg, Germany; New York City, NY; Boston, MA

### Solo Teaching MV Workshops

2013/2014: HfMDK Frankfurt, Germany

1998-2013: Guest artist, Boston Conservatory; Musician's workshop, La Floresta, Uruguay; Moscow Contact Improvisation Festival, Russia; Improvisation Festival of New York, NY; Loft 211, Boston; ECITE conference, Estonia; Contactfestival Freiburg, Germany; CI36 conference, PA; Budapest, Hungary; Earthdance, Plainfield, MA

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### Co-teaching and Music for Workshops with Turning the Wheel Productions

1998-2011: across the USA

### Solo Piano Concerts

1998-2015: London, UK; IL, CO, MA, NY, DC, VT, ME, UT; Moscow, Russia; Freiburg, Germany; Helsinki, Finland; Stolzenhagen, Germany; Istanbul, Turkey;

### Performances with Nancy Stark Smith

2013/2015: "Figment" w/Nancy Stark Smith and Yeong Wen Lee – Taipei; "Glimpse 2" – 92<sup>nd</sup> St. Y, NYC; "Figment" w/Andrew Harwood, Ray Chung and Nancy Stark Smith – Warsaw, Poland; Malaga, Spain; Lisbon, Portugal; Dusseldorf, Germany; Geneva, Switzerland

1998-2012: Montevideo, Uruguay; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Berkeley, CA; Chicago, IL; Moscow, Russia; Uchisar, Turkey; Northampton, MA; Boulder, CO; Melbourne and Sydney, Australia; Philadelphia, PA; Washington, DC; Middlebury, VT; Northampton, MA; Vancouver, Canada; Florence, Italy; Amsterdam, Netherlands; Poitiers, France;

New York City, NY; Eugene, Oregon; Seattle, WA; Paris, France; Montreal, Canada; Earthdance, MA; Helsinki, Finland; Budapest, Hungary;

#### **Other Performances**

2013/2015: performed in Tatsuy Nakatani's Gong Orchestra concert, Smith College, March 25; premiered "A.B" for solo piano and synthesizer and "Rapt in Awe" for 8 musicians at Composers' Concert, Bates Dance Festival, ME; Gala performance, iDance Festival – Taipei; "Threshold" with Chris Aiken and Angie Hauser – Smith College, MA; VIDAM -- Northampton, MA; ongoing performances with improvising dancers in community settings – US and Europe; 2000-2013: Boston Conservatory (w/Besson); Judson Church (w/Aiken and Chung), NYC; Lumen, London, UK; Earthdance (w/Aiken and Hauser), MA; Immersive Studios (w/Lowe and McCoin), Boulder, CO; Bates Dance Festival, ME; Earthdance (w/Harwood/Aiken), MA; Dance Complex, MA; EDAM (w/Bingham/Chung), Canada; Fall Jam, MA; Winterfest (w/Aiken/Hauser) FL; VIDAM (Center for the Arts), Northampton, MA

#### **Commissioned Music for Choreographers**

1998-2011: David Dorfman, CT; David Hurwith, MA; Opiyo Okach (Kenya), ME; Bebe Miller, ME; Brenda Buffalino, CO; Diane Butler, CO; Christine Mauch, Berlin; Meg Cottam, VT; Martha Bowers, CO; David Hurwith, CT; Turning the Wheel, CO; Performance Project, MA; Andrea Olsen, VT; Wendy Woodson, MA; Univ. of CO graduate students, CO; Kelly East, VA; Deborah Reshotko, CO; Liz Lerman, DC; Felice Wolfzahn, MA; Coleman/Freeman, RI; Ellie Sciarra, CO; Toby Hankin, CO; Norah Zuniga Shaw, OH; Peter Pucci, CT; Olivier Besson, MA; Peter Bingham, Canada;

#### **Published Articles**

"Looking at Composition is Like Painting the Golden Gate Bridge - 86 Aspects of Composition", *Contact Quarterly* (2003) Vol. 28, No. 2.

"Notice & Contribute - Collaborative Negotiations Between Improvised Music and Dance", *Contact Quarterly* (2013) Vol. 38, No. 1

#### **Published Website**

February 2011: mikevargas.net  
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#### **CD's**

*Whispering the Turmoil Down* (1997); *Stripes* (1999); *So, Forth* (2001); *Relentless Paintings* (2004); *Pianos in the Wilderness* (2004); *Sometimes* (2006); *Tree: Still Suspended* (2009); *Tree: Unique Natural Area* (2009); *Love Songs to the Shadow*, with Vickie Dodd (2009) - all available from cdbaby.com, cdemusic.org, iTunes, etc. (all on Spotify, for listening only, and a few on Pandora)

#### **Published Videos**

August 2013: "Rapt in Awe" (octet): YouTube; "Threshold", Bates Dance Festival: MV website  
June 2012: "Curiosity is Gravity" (entire concert): Vimeo and YouTube  
October 2009: "enthusiasm: exertion" (solo piano piece): YouTube

#### **Private Music Instruction (piano, composition, improvisation)**

2000–2013: MA

#### **Dance Accompaniment**

1998-2013: post-modern, ballet, modern, contact improvisation, African, community dance - across the USA, around the world

### **LESS-RECENT EXPERIENCE**

#### **Grants**

1993: Colorado Council on the Arts and Humanities, CO  
1993: Boulder County Arts Commission, CO  
1984, 1987, 1990, 1993: Meet the Composer

#### **Teaching in Colleges/Universities**

1983-2005: Smith College, MA; Mt. Holyoke College, MA; Greenfield Community College, MA; Middlebury College, VT; Montgomery College, MD; Queens College, NY; George Mason University, VA; American University, DC

**Teaching (other)**

1988-1998: Aesthetic Education Institute, CO; Foothills Academy, CO; ArtReach.CO; Art Barn, DC; Liz Lerman Dance Exchange

**Private Music Instruction (piano, composition, improvisation)**

1988-1998: DC, CO, MA

**Solo Evening-Length Concerts (original compositions)**

1984-2005: Colorado New Music Association, CO; Creative Music Works, CO; "Colorwheel", CO; "Blind Movies", DC; "Home Movies", DC; "Concrete Movies", DC; "Information the New Sugar", NY; "Information the New Sugar Part Two", MA

**Collaborative Concerts**

1983-2005: Dance Place, D.C.; Middlebury College, VT; Turning the Wheel, USA; Three on the Loose, CO; Earthdance, MA; Buzz Band, CO; Arts/Ideas, CT; Bates Dance Festival, ME; MV CV 2014 pg. 4

**(Collaborative Concerts 1983-2005, continued)**

Philadelphia Improvisation Festival, PA; Dance Complex, MA; Center for the Arts, MA; 6 and 1/2 hour project, MA; Kripalu, MA; phone-in performance, Belgium; Judson Church, NY; APE Cabaret, MA; Natural History Museum, CO; West End Tavern, CO; Vickie Dodd, CO, MA, WA

**Co-teaching and Music for Workshops with Turning the Wheel Productions**

1991-1998: across the USA

**Commissioned Music for Choreographers**

1983-1995: Karen Abromaitis, Serafin Aponte, Roger Belman, Diane Butler, Beth Cachat, David Capps, Beth Davis, Barbara Dilley, Amie Dowling, Karna Handy, Nancy Havlik, Jan Justis, Hannah Kahn, Jude Landsman, Liz Lerman, Alvin Mayes, Bebe Miller, Carol McDowell, Lesa McLaughlin, Polly Motley, Douglas Nielsen, Karen Paneciewicz, Carla Perlo, Deborah Riley, Kim Robards, Yola Rozynek, Ruby Shang, Dixie Shulman, Muna Tseng, Jan Van Dyke, Marina Walchli, Sharon Wyrick

**Composer, Road Manager, Co-Teacher for Workshops with Liz Lerman's Dance Exchange**

1988-1991: - across USA

**Music for Theater**

1985-1987: (founding member) Golden Key - DC, VA, MD, TN, MA, MD,  
1991-1998: Playback Theater West, CO

**Dance Accompaniment**

1978-1998: post-modern, ballet, modern, African, community dance - across the USA

**Formal Education**

1993-1995: Pilates, CO  
1986: yoga, DC  
1984: Alexander Technique, NY  
1983: yoga, NY  
1983: film-scoring: Don Sebesky, NY  
1983: electronic synthesis: PATH, NY  
1982: jazz theory: Michael Stevens, NY  
1980: improvisation: Art Lande, Oregon (band), CO  
1972-1976: B.A. German, University of Colorado, CO  
1964-1970: classical piano studies with William Sible, Denver Piano Conservatory, CO  
1959-1964: classical piano studies, NY