

## **John Crooks**

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### **Education**

M.F.A., Music, 2009

Program in Integrated Composition, Improvisation, and Technology,  
University of California, Irvine, USA

Thesis Paper: *Reevaluating the Foundations of Improvisation: Perspectives on the Potential for Development of New Improvisational Referents*

Thesis Recital: *Improvisations for Solo String Bass/Pieces for Improvised String Bass and Computer.*

Thesis committee: Kei Akagi (chair), Michael Dessen, Chris Dobrian

Bachelor of Music, 1996

Steinhardt School of Education  
New York University

### **Teaching**

#### **Instructor, Cosmos-UC Irvine (2008-present)**

##### **Psychoacoustics and Creative Computing**

Instructor/course designer. Developed unique, computer-based spectroscopy, tuning system generators, ear-training applications and rhythmic exercises for a month-long full-time 5 days per week class covering the use of computers in musical composition and the mathematics used to organize pitch and rhythmic systems. Assist students with creation of experiments and studies of music cognition and perception. Screen applicants; coordinate schedule for two instructors, two assistants, and 20 students.

#### **Teaching Assistant, University of California, Irvine (2007-2009)**

##### **Musicianship (2007-2009)**

Instructor/course designer for required yearlong ear and rhythm training class. Developed original syllabus as well as online and in-class course materials, assignments, and exams. Taught course for two full years, two sections with 20 students each. Combined standard ear training texts with study of Afro-Cuban rhythms, progressive development and testing of interval and chord recognition skills, improvisation, transcription, composition, and effective practice/career strategies.

##### **String Bass Master Class (2009)**

Presented approaches to string bass technique and improvisation.

##### **Media: Foundations and Directions (2009)**

Teaching Assistant for two-quarter 75-student course sequence focused on digital technology and new media art. Presented guest lecture/performance on interactive music systems in my current work.

##### **History of Jazz (2008)**

Teaching Assistant for two-quarter 200-student course sequence. Presented guest lectures on cool jazz and modal jazz as well as in-class performances with Nicole Mitchell, Kei Akagi, and as a soloist.

Teaching, cont'd**String Bass Instruction (2008-2009)**

Worked with undergraduate instrumental performance majors.

**Jazz Ensemble (2008-2009)**

Coached student groups.

**Beatles and the Sixties (2008)**

Teaching Assistant for 200-student lecture course.

**Jazz Orchestra (2007)**

Teaching Assistant. Led rehearsals and coached all sections.

**History of Rock (2007)**

Teaching Assistant for 200-student course.

**Master classes in ensemble performance and composition (1999-2004)**

With the *New Power Trio* (Nate Shaw, piano; Mark Suter, percussion), an ensemble that integrated African diasporic and Central Asian rhythms with the traditions of piano jazz and chamber music. Presented workshops and held residencies at: Emory University, University of South Carolina, University of Illinois, University of Maryland, University of Wisconsin, California State University Fullerton, The College of Charleston (SC), Macalester College, Morgan State University, and Roanoke College, among others.

Lecture video, examples of teaching materials, and more at <http://jcrooks.com/teaching/>

**Computer Music Programming and Composition****Currently composing and creating interactive music applications using:  
Ableton Live, Logic, Max/MSP/Jitter, Pro Tools, Reason, Sibelius/Finale**

Recent works:

***Trio Cycles*** (2010). Sound/video installation for improvising musicians created with MaxMSP/Jitter.

***Descarga*** (2009). Interactive aleatoric composition for improvised string bass and sampled audio created with MaxMSP. Based on African Diasporic rhythmic frameworks.

***Leaf Piece*** (2009). Interactive tonal composition for improvised string bass, MaxMSP/Jitter and Reason. The computer listens to bass improvisation, generates a tonal progression, and relates these to the blossoming of projected crocus flowers.

***Mirrors*** (2009). Computer music composition created using Reason.

***When I'm 65*** (2008). Computer music composition created using sampled audio and Pro Tools.

All recent work available for listening/viewing at <http://jcrooks.com/current-work/>

**Composer/Ensemble Leader****John Crooks Ensemble (2010)**

Compositions for improvising musicians and interactive computer systems. Collaborators include Brad Dutz, percussion, Bevan Manson, piano, and others. Currently performing (April/May 2010) at Blue Whale in Los Angeles ([www.bluewhalemusic.com](http://www.bluewhalemusic.com)).

***Improvisations for Solo String Bass/Pieces for Improvised String Bass and Computer (May 2009)***

Recital given at the University of California, Irvine. Includes solo improvisations and interactive pieces composed using Max/MSP/Jitter and sampled audio. Current work as a soloist explores improvisational processes and the computer as collaborator. DVD forthcoming.

Composer/Ensemble Leader, cont'd**The New Power Trio (1999-2004)**

The NPT's aurally-based compositional process yielded rich and original timbres, forms, and textures.

**Recordings:**

*NPT 2004* (NPTunes 2003)

*Echo Park* (NPTunes 2002)

*The New Power Trio* (NPTunes 2000)

From 1999-2004 NPT toured the US, performing at dozens of venues including:

**Clubs and performance spaces:** The Knitting Factory, The Museum of Modern Art, and Makor, NYC; The Green Mill and Hot House, Chicago; The Dakota, Minneapolis/St. Paul

**Festivals:** The Atlanta Jazz Festival; Spoleto, Charleston, SC; Trinity Church, NYC; Grand Performances and The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles

**Universities:** Emory University, University of South Carolina, University of Illinois, University of Maryland, University of Wisconsin, California State University Fullerton, The College of Charleston (SC), Macalester College, Morgan State University, and Roanoke College.

The New Power Trio was featured in *O* magazine, *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, and other publications.

**The Crooks Band (1995-2000)**

A quartet dedicated to performing my compositions for saxophone, piano, bass, and drum kit. Musicians who performed in the ensemble included: Melvin Butler, Orrin Evans, Mark Ferber, Ari Hoenig, Jacques Schwarz-Bart, and others. Performed regularly at The Knitting Factory (NYC and LA).

**Recordings:**

*Spy vs. Spy* (Crooksband Records 1999)

*Distant Delight* (Crooksband Records 1997)

New Power Trio and Crooks Band audio and press at <http://jcrooks.com/ensemble/>

**Bassist****Freelance string bassist for studio, chamber, orchestra, theater, multimedia, and jazz music performance (1995-current)**

Extensive experience as a musician in the studio as well as orchestral, club and theatrical venues in New York City and southern California. Engagements include: session work for Grammy-winning composer/producer David Foster and Warner Bros. Studios; orchestral bassist with the Riverside Symphony (NYC), Santa Monica Symphony, and the New York Youth Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall; *The Langston Hughes Project* (various university performances including USC, Cal Poly Pomona, and UNV Reno). Notable club venues include: The Blue Note, The 55 Bar, The Jazz Bakery, Catalina Bar and Grill, Steamer's Jazz Café, The World Stage, The Baked Potato, Small's, Smoke, Visiones, Cornelia St Café, and Vibrato. Collaborators include: Jane Monheit, Renee Olstead, Gretchen Parlato, Ralph Lalama, Arturo O'Farrill, Danny Grissett, Gary Foster, Joe La Barbera, Bill Perkins, Orrin Evans, Ari Hoenig, Ravi Coltrane, Steve Huffstader, Joe Bagg, Robert Perkins, Jeff Babko, Bill Reichenbach, Kim Richmond, Ronald Muldrow, Jason Harnell, Mark Ferber, Ali Jackson, Eric Lewis, Kendall Kay, John Beasley, Cecilia Coleman, Jamey Haddad, Steve Cardenas, Chuck Manning, Ron Stout, Bevan Manson, Taylor Eigsti, Jamie Rosenn, Olivia Netwon-John, Ralph Penland, and Harvey Mason.

## **Teaching Interests/Expertise**

Music Technology, Interactive Musical Systems, Computer Music Programming, Composition, online course development, Ear and Rhythm Training, Ensemble Coaching, Improvisation, Jazz History, Jazz Theory, Music Theory, String Bass

## **Research Interests**

Interactive Computer Music, Cognition of Pitch and Rhythm, Improvisational Processes in Music, Musical Form and Improvisation, Rhythm in African Diasporic Music, American Popular Song, String Bass Technique

## **References**

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