

# Mp3 Mike Vargas - Sometimes

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electro-acoustic soundscapes, a result of re-mixing my own recordings in real time while playing along on acoustic instruments

12 MP3 Songs ELECTRONIC: Ambient, ELECTRONIC: Experimental Details: MIKE VARGAS overview current concerns Mike Vargas, composer, improviser, pianist, percussionist, is known for making music with a particularly broad stylistic range. Though he has performed music from Herbie Hancock to Mozart to John Cage, he has spent the last 25 years developing his own forms of music based on structured improvisation. He is currently refining a concert repertoire of original piano works using strict procedural, timbral and temporal limits within which improvisation occurs. He has named these limits Stripes, Zones, and The Wind, and Cells. He is also working with layered music created by playing live over multiple CD recordings of his past music.

contexts In the 45 years since Vargas began his musical training, his curiosity has led him through many contexts, from cocktail lounges in Indonesia to underground clubs on New York's Lower East Side, from the Kennedy Center to nursing homes and from Grimm's fairy tales to Playback Theatre. He has been exploring and questioning music in as many applications as possible, composing context-specific music on the spot in hospitals, concert halls, prisons, corporate conferences, dance classes, churches, train stations, school cafeterias, parks, restaurants and theatre workshops, to name a few.

training and influences Vargas has been playing primarily by ear ever since being trained as a classical pianist at the Denver Piano Conservatory with William Sible in the 60's. As a composer, he is self-taught. His education has also included the study of many other styles (especially jazz and rock in the 70's, electro-acoustic and world music in the 80's.) During the 90's, he focused on late 20th century classical music and painting. His current work is particularly inspired by the work of Morton Feldman and Robert Motherwell. Through formal training, deep listening, imitation, and particularly playing with other musicians, he has gradually evolved a personal vocabulary of gestures and formal ideas.

output In working and touring extensively with dancers and dance and theater companies, Mike Vargas has delighted in created countless pieces of music that have only been played and heard once. However, since 1983 he has also composed over 250 recorded works, using piano, electronic keyboards, percussion, samples and recorded media, found sounds and a variety of small portable

instruments, including end-blown flutes and melodica. In addition, he has created over 100 commissioned dance scores, live and on tape. Almost every year since the early 80's, he has presented concerts of his work, both solo and for small ensembles. His work has often been supported by Meet the Composer and various local, state, and national granting agencies. Since 1995, he has produced seven CD's of original music. Though he often composes and performs as a soloist, Vargas has consistently worked collaboratively, not only with dancers and actors, but in musical duo's and small ensembles as well. Among the choreographers he has worked with are Liz Lerman, Bebe Miller, Nancy Stark Smith, Barbara Dilley, Diane Butler, Peter Pucci, Hannah Kahn, Polly Motley, Douglas Nielsen, Muna Tseng, and Brenda Buffalino. He has played with recording artists such as Ron Miles, Vickie Dodd, Bob Read, Michael Manring, Bruce Odland, Zeena Parkins, Chris Cochrane, Jack Wright, Michael Stanwood, Janet Feder, Jesse Manno, Hearn Gadbois, Steve Bloom, and members of progressive groups such as Thinking Plague, Hamster Theater and the Buzz Band. He has performed across the U.S., in Europe, Indonesia, Australia and Mexico. Since 1998, Vargas has been co-teaching workshops around the world with dancer Nancy Stark Smith. In the 90's, he taught improvisation and performance studies at the Naropa Institute, and in the dance department of the University of Colorado. Vargas has also taught music to dancers at American University, Queens College, Mt. Holyoke College, George Mason University, Middlebury College, Amherst College, Smith College and Montgomery College. He has taught music to K-12 students in private and public schools, and to a wide variety of adult communities in workshop settings such as the Aesthetic Education Institute (CO), the Art Barn (D.C.), and the Bates Dance Festival (ME). Vargas' method of teaching music and improvisation is rooted in hands-on work with sound and movement. He uses plain English to name and observe specific qualities and components of music and composition, in an effort to avoid some of the fears and aesthetic prejudices often associated traditional music vocabulary. The central framework for this approach is his "86 Aspects of Composition", an evolving checklist of specifics to focus on in the study of organization. Each of these aspects represents a particular axis of possibilities from which the structural, procedural, conceptual or contextual details in music (or any medium) can be chosen, when creating or observing. Isolating these aspects and using them to structure improvisational models provides insight into the mechanics of inspiration and encourages a fresh look at the arts.

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