

Performing the Music of Julius Eastman



Photograph by Chris Rusiniak

Curated by Associate Librarian Dr. John Bewley, with texts about the music of Julius Eastman by Jeff Weston, Jan Williams, Joseph Kubera, Bobby Previte, and John Smigielski. The exhibit includes rarely-seen photographs of Julius Eastman by former Buffalo resident Chris Rusiniak.

**University at Buffalo Music Library,
February – June 2017**



Julius Dunbar Eastman was born October 27, 1940 in New York City. He was raised in Ithaca, New York, along with his younger brother Gerald. He developed a local reputation as a gifted vocalist at an early age and studied both piano and dance. He entered Ithaca College in 1958, but upon recommendation from his piano teacher, George Driscoll, he won entrance into the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. While at Curtis he studied piano with Mieczyslaw

Horszowski and composition with A. Constant Vaucrain. He graduated from Curtis in 1963.

After graduation Eastman spent much of his time in Ithaca and New York while continuing his studies and performing as pianist and vocalist. Two of his significant performances during the period were as a landlord in Richard Strauss's *Rosenkavalier* in an August 1966 concert performance by the Philadelphia Orchestra and Eugene Ormandy during their first season at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and at his New York City solo piano debut at Town Hall on December 8, 1966. By 1967 Eastman was in Buffalo where he began his association with the University at Buffalo's Center of the Creative and Performing Arts with the December 18, 1968 Evenings for New Music concert on which he performed his *Piano Pieces I-IV*. He was appointed a Creative Associate the following September and joined the faculty of the University at Buffalo Music Department in 1970 as an instructor. He remained at the University at Buffalo until 1975.

EVENINGS FOR NEW MUSIC

CONCERTAZIONI per oboe e alcuni strumenti (1965) . Bruno Bartolozzi

Lawrence Singer and Messrs. Williams, Levine, Marcus, Coleman

SPIDER SONG (1968) Stanley Lunetta

Larry Austin and Stanley Lunetta—composer/performers

Jan Williams, guide

Jon Hassell, Joseph Romanowski, audio technicians

Charles Haupt, visual technician

Edward Burnham, Robert Cram, Jonathan Marcus, Sharon Lunetta,
Practitioners

DURING INTERMISSION:

ON DISPLAY: *MAP*, a lobby piece by Jon Hassell

PIANO PIECES I, II, III, IV (1968) Julius Eastman

Mr. Eastman

TRACES (1968) Roger Reynolds

Yuji Takahashi and Miss Verberne, Mr. Cram

THE TAROT (1965) Morton Subotnick

Messrs. Cram, Singer, Hassell, Kasproicz, Levine, Coleman,

Burnham, Lunetta, Williams, Takahashi

Conducted by the composer

All the works on this evening's program are being performed in Buffalo for the first time.

GALLERY AUDITORIUM

BEN

12/16/68

By John Dwyer

'Spider Song' Spins Lengthy Web, Traps An American Fantasy

"Spider Song" is inspired by comic-book hero Spider Man, says composer Stanley Lunetta, but it seems to be a whole newsstand of cartoons and impressions in flashing montage, to a fitful score of drums, pot-cellar piano, trumpet, dialogue and a climax of deafening rock.

This was the feature spectacular on the "Evenings for New Music" concert to a packed house, Sunday evening in Albright-Knox Art Gallery auditorium. The program goes to Carnegie Recital Hall in New York tomorrow.

In "Spider Song" two composers, Mr. Lunetta and Larry Austin, portray two composers working up a new rock song, playing and talking and eventually banging it out in thunderous fulfillment with the aid of other players and sound-equipment operators. Behind reflecting gauze of a centered screen, the main players appear and disappear in trick lighting, with a cartoon-panel effect.

OTHER SCREENS show stills and color movies of the composers, salamanders, a red-capped guide and tour party, abstracts and a bunch of modern-age symbols and figures. In the aisles, red-capped guide Jan Williams recruited a tour party from the seats and they marched around all over, including on stage, while he explained the whole thing.

I had to get out, after it built up to the ear-piercing level, out of a barrage of giant speakers. It had hit its dramatic peak by that time, anyway. The score is budgeted for a half-hour, and that's easily 10 minutes beyond the work's natural build-up and sign-off.

Other than that, it's the whole street-side, youth-market American Fantasy, what every guitar-toting young man wants out of

with viola, split resonances sounding two and more partials of a single oboe tone at the same time, and other radical ways of playing, in a somewhat studious but well-crafted score.

Pianist-composer Julius Eastman played four of his own short pieces, sometimes involving a rising, muted siren wail from the performer himself, a few raps on wood with a soft mallet, and a paso doble with his busy heels, as an accompaniment to keyboard dance.

Brief, bright and imaginative, they were received very well.

"Traces" by Roger Reynolds involved pianist Yuji Takahashi, cellist Marijke Verberne, flutist Robert Cram and sound technicians, in an overlay of theme clusters and, yes, traces, to long, stable-toned obbligatos in electronic lines.

COMPOSER Morton Subotnick conducted a 10-member ensemble in his own "Tarot," a reference to the ancient fortune-telling cards, the movements in turn emphasizing brass and metal percussion, hide percussion, xylophone and piano.

It proceeds from frame to frame — scenario scenes, as it were — total enclosures conducted almost exclusively for duration and instrumental complex, exceedingly interesting designs involving some shouts and handclaps, contrasting delicate figurations and one grand roulade for drums and everybody. A strong piece, and large enough to do well on an orches-

GALLERY AUDITORIUM

Eastman's 'Mad King': Mighty Work of Theater

By JOHN DWYER

The dramatic sensation of this town over many seasons was the portrayal of mad King George III by singing actor Julius Eastman, Sunday evening in Albright-Knox Art Gallery auditorium, hailed by a standing crowd with noisy applause and bravos.

This was the opening of the annual "Evenings for New Music" series by the UB Creative Associates, the audience packed to the walls.

The music-theater work was "Eight Songs for a Mad King" by British composer Peter Maxwell-Davies, with verses by Randolph Stow including wistful, pathetic, ranting passages by the monarch himself, as taken down at court. It's for the one voice and six players.

MODERN MEDICAL science attributes the undoing of George III to a genetic disease called porphyria, but the result was a garish derangement in any case, and the inspiration here for a wonderful and frightful role.

Mr. Eastman is a basso, pianist, composer, dancer and actor who has had a good deal of impact in Western New York, but this performance puts him at quite another level. It would be a shame if it were not repeated in Buffalo. The Creative Associates already had presented it in New York's Carnegie Recital Hall on tour, to a big reception,

APPEARING IN royal brocaded gown and furred cap, Mr. Eastman played the pitiable monarch as stricken and crazy but endlessly human, as he roved the stage or sank, spent and muttering, on his centered throne.

His spastic delivery included squeaks, moans, growls and roars, a marvelous falsetto right on the tone, a remarkable mimetic gift in responding with matching timbres to string, flute, bell, bird-whistle or drum.

But the underlying agony, the

imploping for human understanding, the wrenching effect of the king's straining for reason amid the whirlwinds of his own mind, these were the heights of the Eastman performance. And the music with its ravaged strains of court dance, folk air and Handel oratorio reflected the twice-terrible insanity of familiar things in frightful disarray.

I understand the composer chose Mr. Eastman for a recent recording of the work. It seems to have been made for him.

THERE WERE three other works. A 1961 Trio by Israeli composer Ben Zion Orgad moved in cantillation, pizzicatos and drum sounds with quite traditional, even movie-style effect, in a very able performance by violinist Mark Sokol, violist Jesse Levine and cellist Douglas Davis.

"Cocktail Music" by Salvatore Martirano with pianist Roger Shields was brief, witty and quite French to my ears, with 37-note adornments, triple trills and upper-tone chirps in fine-line grace, well-done.

"Penetrations V" by Argentine composer Alcides Lanza was elaborately staged, with two big spotlights changing color, thrumming strobe effects and 10 musicians playing and speaking lines in antiphonal contrast to an electronic score. It moved through shock channels that have become fairly well-grooved in the past decade, on to an angry-mob climax and rumbling denouement.

This was music theater, too, but the ensuing soul-force of Mad King George put it out of our minds.

Julius Eastman achieved his widest acclaim for his performance in Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King*. His performance was nominated for a Grammy Award when the recording was remastered and released by Nonesuch Records in 1973.



Julius Eastman performing Peter Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, 1975
Photograph by Chris Rusiniak

After leaving Buffalo in 1976, Eastman spent most of the remainder of his years in New York, including Brooklyn and the Bronx. He continued composing and performing, cobbling together a succession of part-time jobs in order to live. He returned to Buffalo seemingly without notifying friends and died alone May 28, 1990 in Millard Fillmore Hospital.

Full biographical details about Julius Eastman are available in *Gay Guerrilla: Julius Eastman and His Music*, edited by Renée Levine-Packer and Mary Jane Leach.

Julius Eastman composed approximately 58 works. Scores have been found for only sixteen compositions, along with a fragment of another. The University at Buffalo Music Library's holdings of scores by Julius Eastman increased from two to eight thanks to gifts by Renée Levine-Packer and Peter Gena. The holdings now include *Macle*, *Tripod*, *Colors*, *Crazy N****r*, *Evil N****r*, *Gay Guerrilla*, *The Moon's Silent Modulation*, and *Thruway*. In addition to these works, Renée Levine-Packer's collection includes a score of the first two movements of Eastman's *Three Pieces for violin and piano*, previously considered lost. The lack of scores for so much of Eastman's work and the way in which existing scores are notated presents serious challenges for performers.

Julius Eastman: Three Pieces for Violin and Piano

Andante
I Dedicated to Bill

mp mf

mp

p

p

Viol

Colors ^{P.D.} I

J. Eastm

① *Blue* *laughter*

② *Orange* *accelerando* *constant* *ritard*

③

④ *Black*

⑤

⑥ *Red*

⑦

Yellow

Purple

Blue

Orange

less up w/ 21 quavers

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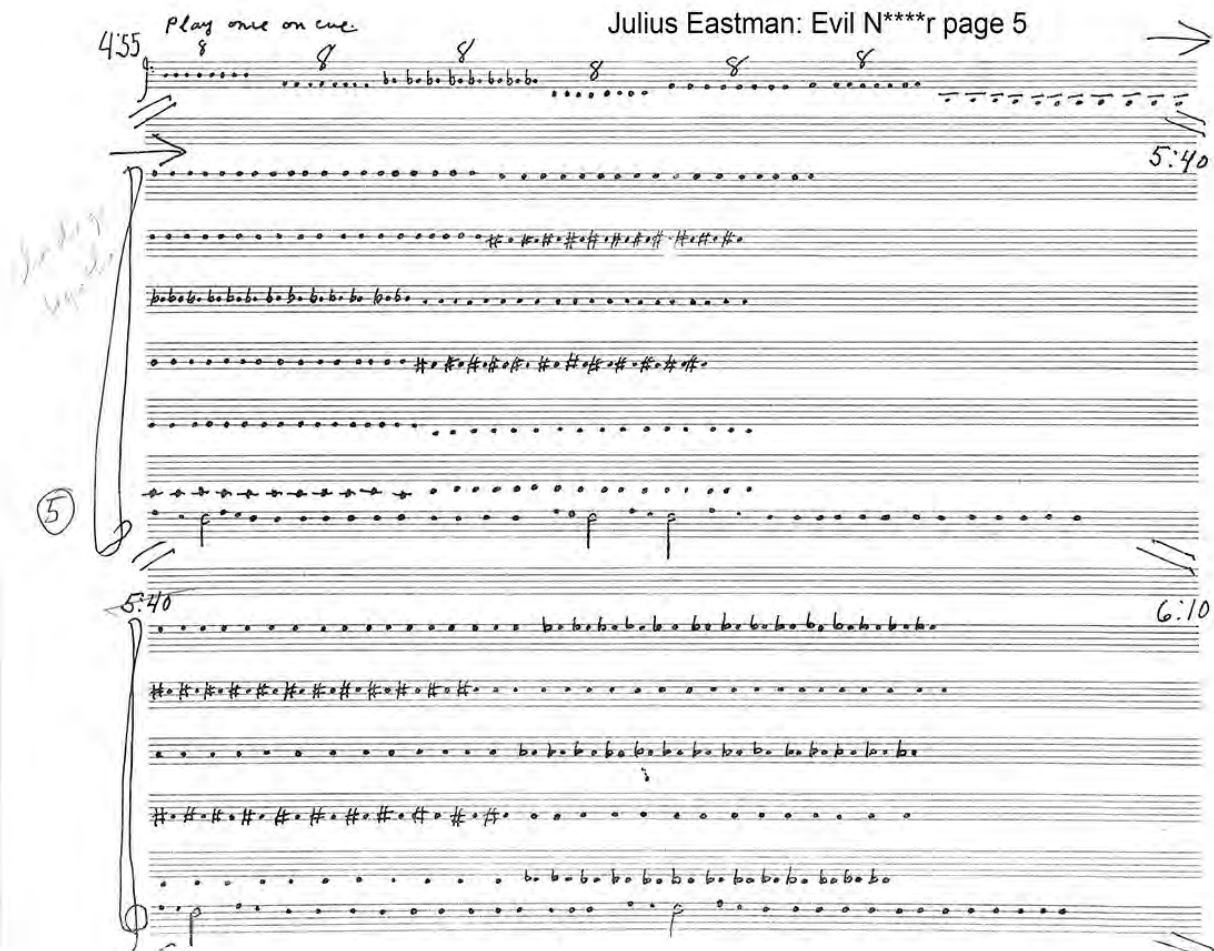
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Julius Eastman: Colors (1973)

The Actual and The Virtual by Jeff Weston

Vague and undescriptive against the prescriptive notational tradition found throughout the classical European canon, scores to Eastman's late-works serve as visual tools asking, in the words of Fanon (1967), "Where am I to be classified? Or, if you prefer, tucked away?" (Fanon, Franz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove, 1951) Inkblots muddy the notation. Staves are left unfinished or are without content, floating as messages of invisibility against a white backdrop. Undoubtedly, the score raises more questions than it answers. What is to be played? Upon what instruments? What tempo? What dynamic? This score does not serve as a decipherable plan, but rather as an insufficient map that necessitates frustration, interpretation and inquiry. The interpreter serves as an actor within this network of mediated visibility.

The photocopies of the score of Eastman's *Evil N****r* highlight the invisible, an emptiness that is attempting to be filled. A tension is present between a power of representation and a power of authentication.



We find this tension sonically highlighted in the dearth of recordings of Eastman's work. Performances following Eastman's death have been closely realized by utilizing the few extant recordings as conclusive objects. *Unjust Malaise*, a compilation CD of known Eastman recordings, contains the only commercially available releases of *Stay on It*, *If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Rich?*, *Prelude to the Holy Presence of Joan D'Arc*, *Holy Presence of Joan D'Arc*, *Evil N****r*, *Crazy N****r*, and *Gay Guerilla*. These recordings, most notably *Stay On It*, *Crazy N****r* and *Gay Guerilla*, have been repurposed as stand-ins for Eastman's scores, or lack thereof.

In place of Eastman's notation, transcription scores have been constructed from these sonic totems (See the transcription by Cornelius

Dufallo and Chris McIntyre of Eastman's *Stay On It*). What is lost within these facsimiles, these attempts at illuminating the invisible? What is gained?

Stay On It (1973)

Julius Eastman
realized by C. McIntyre & C. Dufallo
for Ne(x)tworks

1 Main Theme
tutti
♩ = 96-100
f (any)
repeat until cue

Layering Cells

Cell 1
(Any octave)

Cell 2
Voice (false 7th) continue...
Stay On It Stay On It Stay On It Stay On It

Cell 3
3a 3b 3c

Cell 4
sustain 5th, 7th, or tonic

Cell 5
sustain non-chordal pitch

Cell 6
long decay

Memory becomes an important actor within analyzing Eastman's music. As an attempt at elucidating the interaction between the human and the nonhuman in the network of Eastman, much work has been in

the form of interviewing those who worked intimately with and performed the composer's music; by collecting memories and personal narratives of who Eastman *was* and what his music *is*. The lack of the authentic and actual invites the heightened role of the virtual, including its aspect of memory.

© Jeff Weston

Remembering Julius Eastman's *Macle* by Jan Williams

I remember that I immediately checked a dictionary as soon as Julius gave me the score for *Macle*. I discovered that a macle is “a diamond or other crystal that is twinned”. Back to the dictionary for “twinned” - “a crystal that is a composite of two (or sometimes more) parts that are reversed in orientation with respect to each other (typically by reflection in a particular plane)”. That pretty accurately describes the SEM Ensemble personnel at that time; a black, a white, an Italian, and a Czech.



S.E.M. Ensemble members Julius Eastman, Roberto Laneri, Jan Williams, and Petr Kotik
Photograph by Jim Tuttle

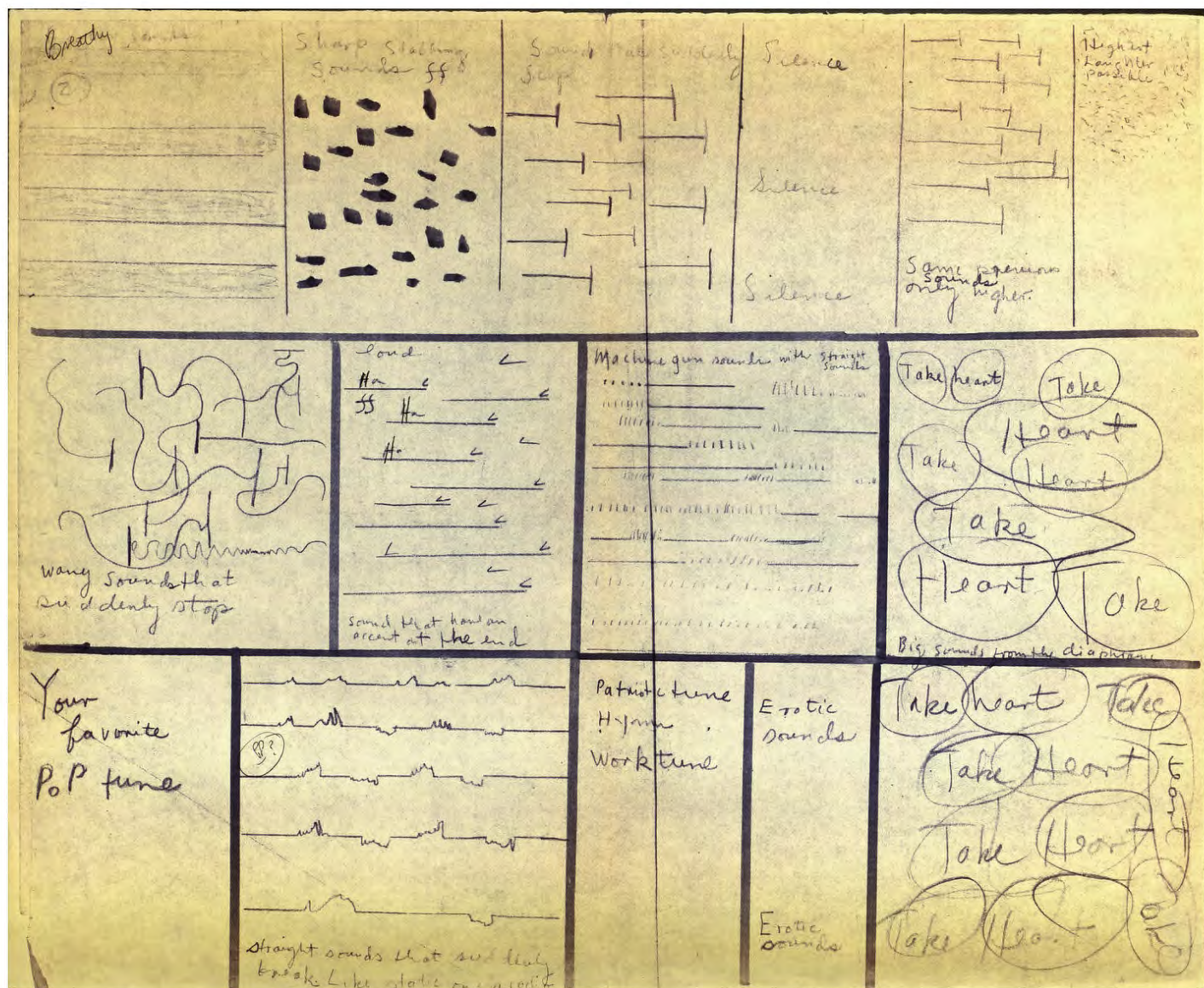
We four, Petr Kotik, Roberto Laneri, Julius Eastman and myself, were the SEM Ensemble for the performance of *Macle* at the Albright Knox Art Gallery on February 13, 1972. I was not particularly surprised by *Macle*'s graphic notation given Julius' propensity for coming up with hybrid notational systems for his pieces, such systems having been quite common since at least the mid-1950's. *Macle*, employing vocal sounds only and using a wide range of techniques, lends itself naturally to graphic notation. Nor was I surprised that there were no performance instructions included with the score. But, not to worry, Julius would be performing the piece with us and would undoubtedly talk us through the piece step by step during rehearsals.

Macle (1971)..... Julius Eastman

The boxes were arranged one after the other, in an orderly and musical fashion. I then cut the tapes and made different orders, without foreknowledge of the reordering. The players took their boxes and reordered them also. The boxes, being thus reordered, stood alone and separate. - J. E.

Julius Eastman's program notes for *Macle*

I recently looked at the score and listened to the recording of that performance. I had not heard it or seen the score I used for the performance in more than 40 years. Turns out, I did mis-remember one crucial aspect; I thought that we all performed our parts independently from one another, jumping randomly from one boxed element to another. Not so. We actually moved through the score as an ensemble, albeit a loose one, over the 34 minute duration of the piece. It's even possible to follow the score, for the most part, while listening to the recording.



That said, there are moments where one performer seems to introduce material out of order or even appears to be improvising new material. This raises the question of whether Julius might have altered or enhanced our individual "scores", customizing them ever so slightly for each of us? Or, did he decide on these changes during our rehearsals and simply never added them to the score later? Was there then ever a master score which represented all four performers' individual parts? Probably not.



Jan Williams during performance of Julius Eastman's *Macle*, 13 February 1972
Unidentified photographer

I remember that our performance demeanor for *Macle* was one of cool nonchalance. By that I mean that there were no overt physical gestures or theatrical histrionics. We were seated, each with a single microphone and music stand, as if performing a traditionally notated ensemble work, a string quartet for example. This seeming disconnect from the extremely emotional, highly charged and dynamic vocalizations lent a surreal aura to the performance. Equally surreal for performer and audience member alike, I'm sure.

To me the audience was clearly polarized, either hating or loving it. *Macle* was the final work on the program of five pieces all written in 1971, except for one which was from 1970, definitely the music of our (that) time. The other composers were New York City's Barbara Kolb, Buffalo's Leo Smit, Lukas Foss and Julius Eastman. The pieces could not have been more different from one another in style and in the technical demands asked of the performers. Looking back on that program with 40 years of perspective, I'm struck with how radical that program was compared to most contemporary music concerts today. And, as outrageous as it was, Julius Eastman's *Macle* was not at all out of place on an Evenings for New Music program in 1972. This was the music of our time in all its varied forms, music that was at once

exhilarating and baffling, demanding a degree of curiosity and patience from the listener not commonly found in today's audiences for the new in music. One thing is certain, Evenings for New Music audiences were seldom bored.

EVENINGS FOR NEW MUSIC

(7:45 P.M.)

R O U N D S

a participatory electronic environment by Joel Chadabe

(8:30 P.M.)

Solitaire (1971)* Barbara Kolb
to Dick & Nona Trythall
Richard Trythall

Channel Firing (1970) and **Myopia: A Night** (1971)** . . . Leo Smit
Laurence Bogue
Richard Trythall, Petr Kotik, Donald Montalto, Lee Lovallo,
Henry Rubin, Douglas Davis
Lukas Foss, conductor

Ni Bruit Ni Vitesse (1971)** Lukas Foss
Lukas Foss and Jan Williams

This composition was commissioned by the New York State Council on the Arts in honor of the 10th anniversary of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and is dedicated to the Gallery.

INTERMISSION

Macle (1971)* Julius Eastman
John R. Adams, Julius Eastman, Petr Kotik, Roberto Laneri, Jan Williams

**First Performance
*First Buffalo performance

(10:15 P.M.—Restaurant/Lounge)

S H A D O W S A N D L I N E S

suspended electronic sounds by Joel Chadabe

The Center is supported in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts.
Supplementary electronic equipment courtesy of Moog Music, Inc.

The recent resurgence of interest in Julius' music and life, due in no small part to the publication of Renée Levine Packer and Mary Jane

Leach's book *Gay Guerrilla - Julius Eastman and His Music*, is welcome and long overdue. I feel truly fortunate to have had the opportunity to know Julius and to have performed his music extensively.

© Jan Williams

Recollections of Julius Eastman and His Piano Music by Joseph Kubera

Julius came to my Staten Island home in the mid-1980s. He just showed up unannounced at the door, at 9 or 10 AM with boyfriend in tow. He greeted me with his usual growl- "KUBERRAHHH!" Once inside, his first question was, "Got any scotch?" Then he sat down at the old Weber grand I used at the time, and played his recent *Piano 2*, a solo sonata in three movements. As usual, his playing was powerful and poetic.



Joseph Kubera (top row, 3rd from right) and Julius Eastman (bottom row, 2nd from right) with other Creative Associates on the steps of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1974

Photograph by Mickey Osterreicher, MD02-021

I had known Julius from my days in Buffalo in the mid-1970s when we were both Creative Associates. I clearly remember his performances of Peter Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs of a Mad King*, Luis de Pablo's *Berceuse* for two singers and ensemble, and Pauline Oliveros' *Crow*. I'd witnessed his controversial performance of John Cage's *Song Books* with the S.E.M. Ensemble at June in Buffalo in 1975, and Cage's furious reaction to it. But I actually got to know him better after I moved to New York around 1979.



Rehearsal of Pauline Oliveros's *Crow* at Artpark, June 1975
Julius Eastman is likely the figure in the left distant background
Photograph by Chris Rusiniak

Julius was always a presence when he appeared at a concert or reception in the eighties, sometimes in a long white robe. He was always sharp-witted and quick to laugh. At a reception, I remember him telling me that living in New York was all about "CAREEEEEER." I assumed he was referring to a sense that New York was where things were happening, not that his own career there was flourishing.

One time, after some rehearsal or other, Julius took some of us to the aptly-named Terminal Bar, opposite the Eighth Avenue bus terminal. It offered much of the darker side of the old New York, a dark, discomfiting atmosphere and a bartender who paced back and forth behind the bar like a caged animal. But there were more lighthearted gatherings too, like SoHo's Cupping Room. Beth Anderson, Jeffrey Lohn, Jon Gibson . . . we were all part of that downtown scene in those days.

My main contact with Julius was at his performances. There was a memorable performance of *The Holy Presence, Joan of Arc* perhaps at Cooper Union. And I have a strong memory of a concert given on February 23, 1979 at the auditorium of Medgar Evers College in New York, called "Poetry 'n Music." As part of a diverse program, Julius played, and simultaneously sang, Beth Anderson's piece, *Woman/Rite*. Julius made a lofty experience of the melody line, and per the composer's suggestions made liberal repeats, and took the spare piano part as a mere point of departure - his hands took him all over the keyboard. Somehow time seemed to stop, and you were there alone with the music, and it was very moving. Beth Anderson pronounced it a beautiful performance.

Around 1979 and 1980, I was involved with some concerts that Julius arranged at the Third Street Music Settlement in the East Village. The Settlement wanted to reach out to the community in those days and, since Julius lived in the neighborhood, the concert hall was offered to him for a modest rental. These concerts involved a group of composers including David Feldman, Ann Silsbee, and Judith Sainte-Croix (then Judith Martin, who along with Julius and me had been Creative Associates at SUNY Buffalo). The Third Street concerts took place in the school's oval auditorium with stadium-type seating.

A major performance took place at The Kitchen in 1980, when Julius, Jeffrey Lohn and I performed *Crazy N****r* with a group of other musicians joining in at the end to add extra voices to the massive

texture. A recording of this performance still exists in The Kitchen's archives.

Julius' multiple-piano pieces built their structures, at least in part, by means of regular blocks of time controlled by a stopwatch, each new block adding voices to the sonority, or sometimes abruptly changing the texture entirely. Commonly, each voice consisted of repeated notes, with each new voice adding to the harmonic density. But melodic groupings also appeared, as well as specified long tones struck without coordination. Usually, a steady, driving pulse kept the momentum.

A great deal of the performance practice depended on having Julius present to deliver instructions in order to clarify the sometimes vague performance indications. For example, notes were written in a particular octave, but were really meant to be played in various octaves of the pianists' choice. A pianist could also play more than one line of music simultaneously within a section.

His *Piano 2*, a sonata in three movements from 1986, was quite different from the large-scale "multiples" pieces such as *Crazy N****r* or *Evil N****r*. Completely through-composed and exactly notated, though still showing a strong driving pulse in the outer movements. I tried to bring Julius' expansive yet hard-hitting character to my playing of *Piano 2* when I first played it at Merkin Hall in 1991.



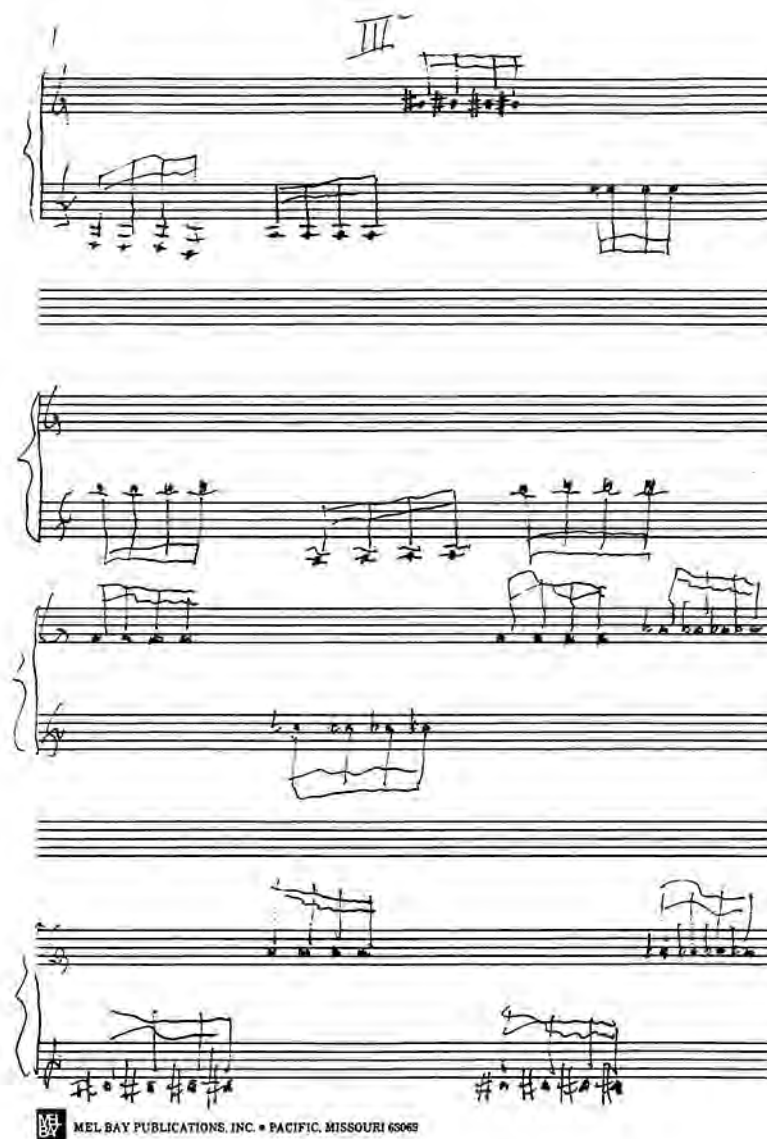
Julius had a very erratic manuscript, at least at the time he notated *Piano 2*. The notes took up too much space on the page for comfortable reading, and were inscribed with a shaky hand. Quarter notes lack stems. There are no dynamics, phrasings, articulations, time signatures, and only one or two bar lines. In the absence of markings, I rely substantially on what I recall of the way Julius played it for me that day at my home.

There are a couple of quirks in the notation of the piece. Julius ended each movement with a Japanese character and the word "zen," and he

scrawled the word "Chopin" over an accompaniment figure that resembles a Chopin melody.



The music itself is assured, firm, and tightly worked. The continuous, driving pulses of the multiple-piano pieces are expressed here as long strings of sixteenth notes in the outer movements, coursing up and down the keyboard. Often these are in the left hand, over which long treble melodies soar in quarters and halves.



Some of his familiar additive process appears in the opening of the third movement, where rows of repeated notes become repeated chords by addition of a new note with each group of four.

The second movement is a lovely slow movement that has an air of desolation about it, yet exhibits poignant chord progressions. Even here

a languid, continuous eighth-note motion makes an appearance.

II

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© Joseph Kubera

Ching Ching by Bobby Previte

Julius Eastman was responsible for the single most mortifying moment I have ever had on stage in my entire life (so far, anyway).

I met Julius in the early seventies, when I was a student of Jan Williams in the University at Buffalo percussion department. When I applied there, I was this kid drummer who hadn't read a note of music in his life, playing gigs in seedy bars since I was 14. But I was passionate about music and somehow Jan accepted me, blowing my 19-year old rock-and-soul drumming mind. Soon I was playing *In C*, reading *Silence*, and getting lost playing the temple block part during *Oiseaux Exotiques* at Evenings for New Music, probably because I couldn't stop thinking, "I'm on stage with Lukas Foss!"

I had some designs of leaving the trap drums and becoming a percussionist, but in truth I had started so late, it was not to be. Nevertheless, I was forever changed by rubbing up against all the people there, and particularly by Julius. His piano playing was singular. He could sing like a bird. His compositions astonished me. I thought he was absolutely brilliant.

By 1974 I had graduated and started my Buffalo music career. I played with almost everybody in town, and had my own band. I was cruising along. Then one day, Julius called me for a gig. But not on drums. A gig on marimba. I owned a marimba, but just for fun, a relic from my days in the UB percussion ensemble, along with a set of chromatic brake drums and a rusted flexatone. I immediately demurred. "Julius, I'm really not a very good marimba player. You need to call someone else." Julius would have none of it. "Oh it's easy," he said. "Easy?" I said. "Julius, I know your music, your music is not 'easy.' It is quite demanding and I don't think I am up to it." "You will have no problem," he said. Exactly like that. "You will have no problem." I couldn't even make the rehearsal. I thought that sealed it, but no, even without a rehearsal, "You will have no problem." I finally assented. After all, this was one of my heroes.

The piece was to start the second set of Julius' date at the Tralfamadore Cafe, at that time a great club run by the Lawson brothers. It was your classic basement club à la the Village Vanguard, and like the Vanguard, acoustic music sounded superb in there, like some famous sound designer built the thing expressly for music. The rent was low enough that they could book some crazy nut like Julius Eastman. It was cozy as hell, and late at night, after your gig, you inevitably wound up there, checking out the late set over a bourbon or a scotch. Nice.

Before my hit with Julius, I had a gig somewhere else with my own band. My musicians had played beautifully, and I was feeling very pumped. I packed up my drums, rushed home, and exchanged them for my marimba, getting to the Tralf about ten minutes before the second set, as I had told Julius I would. There was a big set up already on stage. He told me to put my marimba on the extreme end of stage right, in the front. The stage at the Tralf had only one entrance - stage left. Being on stage right meant you had no escape route.

As I finished setting up, Julius put a music stand in front of me and then dropped a single page on it, the thing I was going to have "no problem" with. First of all, it was in an impossible time signature - no wait, it was in a multiple time signature, something like $13/8 + 5/4$ +something-else-you-can't-sight-read time signature. And the page was black. Black with notes. Totally black. Notes of all durations and descriptions. Notes with huge leaps between them. Notes with wild stems. Angry, mean-looking notes. He then simply walked away with no explanation, zip. I called after him, something like "Julius! What?? This is the 'easy' part you told me about?" But Julius was already sitting down at the piano. And I watched in horror as all the musicians were beginning to mount the stage, each shooting me a cursory glance that couldn't by any stretch be construed as anything resembling friendly. These were **THE** Creative Associates, whom I had idolized for years, and oh man, there were a lot of them coming up on stage. The only person I could remotely call a friend was the electric bass player, Julius' brother, Gerry, with whom I had played in the Buffalo jazz scene.

I looked back at the page (unfortunately, it had not vanished in the interim). Frantically I tried to learn the first line, figuring I could at least have a good fifteen seconds or so until all hell broke loose. But it was hopeless. I couldn't have learned that thing in a month, much less in the thirty seconds I figured I had left. Had not my retreat been cut off, I may have bolted.

But then, as if this weren't enough, I saw Julius reach down behind the rather lousy Tralf piano (a shabby upright that Julius played with his back to the audience) and appeared to be plugging something into the wall outlet. A horrific, ear splitting sound slammed into my right ear. I wheeled around and directly behind me was a Rube Goldberg device: Julius had constructed two huge wooden slabs connected by a track, with a bunch of sleigh bells nailed to the top piece. Now electrified, the top piece began relentlessly moving back and forth along the track, ringing the bells. The sound was something like "CHING ching, CHING ching CHING ching." And it was deafening.

And there were TWO such devices, one on each end of the stage. This was well before the technology was invented that could actually synchronize two devices thus connected. So, instead of what I supposed Julius wanted, a stereo "CHING ching CHING ching CHING ching" in complete synchronization, what he got, when the devices diverged after the first nanosecond or so, was a completely random "ch CHing cing CH CH ngCH CHing chiNG" etcetera, or, if you prefer, total chaos. Which by itself, on another day, I would have rather enjoyed, having myself played a lot of free jazz in that very joint. But today, ah, no.

I remember thinking, what note value could these ching chings be representing? Quarter notes? Eighth notes? Do they have any relation to the piece at all? I had not been to a rehearsal. Well, I reasoned, at least I'll be able to figure that out when they count it off.

I looked back to my left, and all the CAs were staring at me, regarding this new kid at the end of the stage very dubiously, yet as if I

represented the integral element that was missing at the rehearsals. The element that would now be inserted, bringing this music to its deservedly triumphant realization. CHING ching, CHING ching, CHING ching. I took a deep breath, and waited for the count-off.

Except of course, there was no count off.

I don't know what I was thinking. Classical musicians do not count-off. Counting off is a bit too, oh, I don't know, vulgar? Déclassé? Too transparent for the deep mystery that is music? Classical musicians nod. One little nod. So, (CHING ching), I got the "Ready?" look, then "the nod." We were off.

I made a split-second decision to call the ching chings quarter notes and with that in mind tried to play the first line as best I could. I glanced over to the left, and the entire band looked as if they had smelled something really, really foul. I got an emphatic "no" head-shake from Nora Post, the oboist who, since she was in the front, was leading the charge. Everyone stopped dead (except of course for the infernal "CHING..."). Reset. Another "Ready?" Then, another nod.

OK, I thought, let's call the ching chings eighth notes and play it like that. Maybe that's the problem! Nope. Another shake of the heads, but discernably more, shall we say, intense than the first? Again everyone halted.

You must understand, Buffalo was, and is, a small town. I know. I am from an even smaller one very close by- Niagara Falls. Buffalo isn't at all like New York (big news). In New York, apart from the occasional person you might meet at a party, or at an artist colony, or as a colleague's significant other, you pretty much only hang out with people in your particular music scene, and even then, you could go years and never meet someone who swims in the same pond you do. But in a town like Buffalo, everybody knows everybody. Most people in the audience had seen me play at the Tralf, and at other venues, many times. In my twenty-five year old mind at least, I counted myself as

somewhat of a local hero (ha ha). Now this everybody was witnessing my complete dressing down. I made a decision.

At the next nod, I was going to play whatever I felt like, and never look up until the piece ended. This way, at least, whatever dignity I had left would remain intact. The thought crossed my mind that maybe this was actually all a part of the piece.

As I said, it was the seventies, and stuff like that happened all the time. Yes, that must be it! And we would all laugh about it later. "At this point, bar 19, the percussionist, becoming frustrated, decides to improvise...
."

When nod number three came, I stared down at the marimba and played whatever I heard, (whatever that means). I could sense the frantic efforts of the CAs trying to get my attention, but no dice man, I was not looking over there, and I was not gonna stop for love or money until that damn CHING ching did. It was me against the CHING ching. A fight to the death.

But I hadn't reckoned on the tenacity of my bandmates. Gerry Eastman, as it turned out, and unluckily enough for me, had a very long cord on his electric bass. He started to make his way, slowly, excruciatingly slowly, across the stage in my direction. Yep, there was no mistaking it, he was coming after me.

Negotiating very carefully around all those people on stage, Gerry was moving in slow motion. Here comes Gerry, turning the bass neck straight up, still playing, wending his way around the piano. CHING ching. Now there's Gerry, crouching down like Chuck Berry doing the duck walk, underneath the flute player. CHING ching CHING ching. Gerry slithers through the brass section. CHING ching. Involuntarily, I started to lean as far away as I could. I think I was actually cowering against the right wall. And finally, here is Gerry, after what seems an eternity, reaching me. Gerry, my friend. And with the CHING ching CHING ching CHING ching swirling all around us, and with all eyes

upon us, he bends over into my ear and screams at the top of his lungs, "Hey man!. .. .**LAY OUT!**"

At which point I had to stand at my instrument, my now useless arms hung down at my sides, for FIFTEEN MINUTES as the ensemble played the rest of the piece without me. I felt like the child who has to stand at the front of the class when he has misbehaved. All that was missing was the white conical cap saying, Dunce.

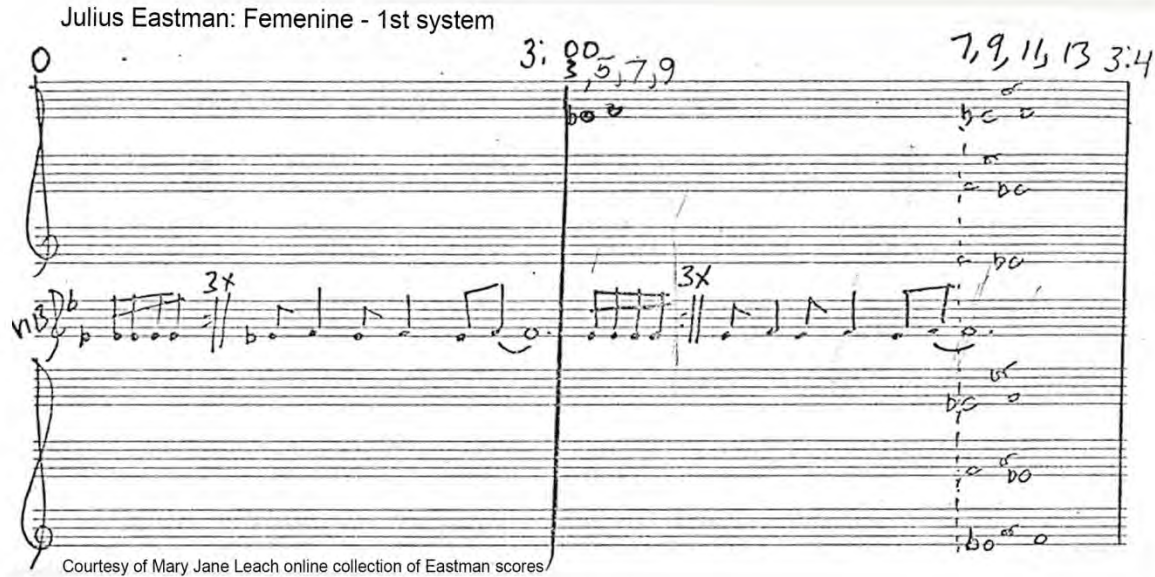
The next day, to insure that this would never happen to me again, I put my marimba up for sale, returned exclusively to the drums, and decided to move to New York City.

I never did figure out what could have possibly possessed Julius. When the piece was over, I had sought out some people in the ensemble, to ask what was supposed to happen, what the piece was all about, but no one would explain it to me. Maybe it couldn't be explained. Maybe in some past life I did something heinous to Julius. More probably, Julius simply had no idea how difficult his music really was.

Or, maybe there's a positive spin on it. Julius Eastman saving the world from a mediocre marimba player, driving him to the big city and to his true calling, the drums. Julius rights the Karmic forces of the universe.

Who knows? He was such a genius, maybe that was his intent all along. With him, anything was possible.

Note: the title of the Eastman work performed at the Tralfamadore is not known. The use of sleigh bells is very similar to the scoring of Eastman's *Feminine* (1974) but as the page from *Feminine* demonstrates, it is scored for vibraphone and doesn't resemble Bobby Previte's description of the opening.



© Bobby Previte

The Northwestern University Piano Pieces By John Smigielski

In 1980, Julius Eastman was invited for a residency at Northwestern University by SUNY Buffalo alumnus Peter Gena, amidst growing racial tensions on the campus. They decided to present Eastman's latest installments in his *N****r* series; *Evil N****r*, *Crazy N****r*, and *Gay Guerrilla*. The titles of the pieces caused such controversy, that they were redacted from the concert posters and programs, re-billed simply as "New Music for Four Pianos." Before the concert started, Eastman came out to reveal the titles of the pieces and introduced them. During his introduction, he explained his use of the word *n****r*.

"Now the reason I use that particular word is because for me it has a, what I call a "basicness" about it, that is to say that I feel that in any case the first *n****rs* were of course the field *n****rs* and upon that is really the basis of the American economic system, without field *n****rs*

we wouldn't really have such a great and grand economy. So that is what I call first and great n****r, the field n****rs, and what I mean by n****rs is that thing which is fundamental, that person or thing that obtains to a basicness, a fundamentalness and eschews that thing which is superficial or, what can we say, elegant."

*Evil N****r* (1979) is the most frantic of the three works, due to the tempo and virtuosic nature of the piece. It is also remarkably accessible, due to the constant repeated motives. This is a different approach than Eastman uses in *Crazy N****r*, and *Gay Guerrilla*, which utilize an additive horizontal process in regards to harmony.

EVIL N

Julius Eastman
Sept 10, 79

①

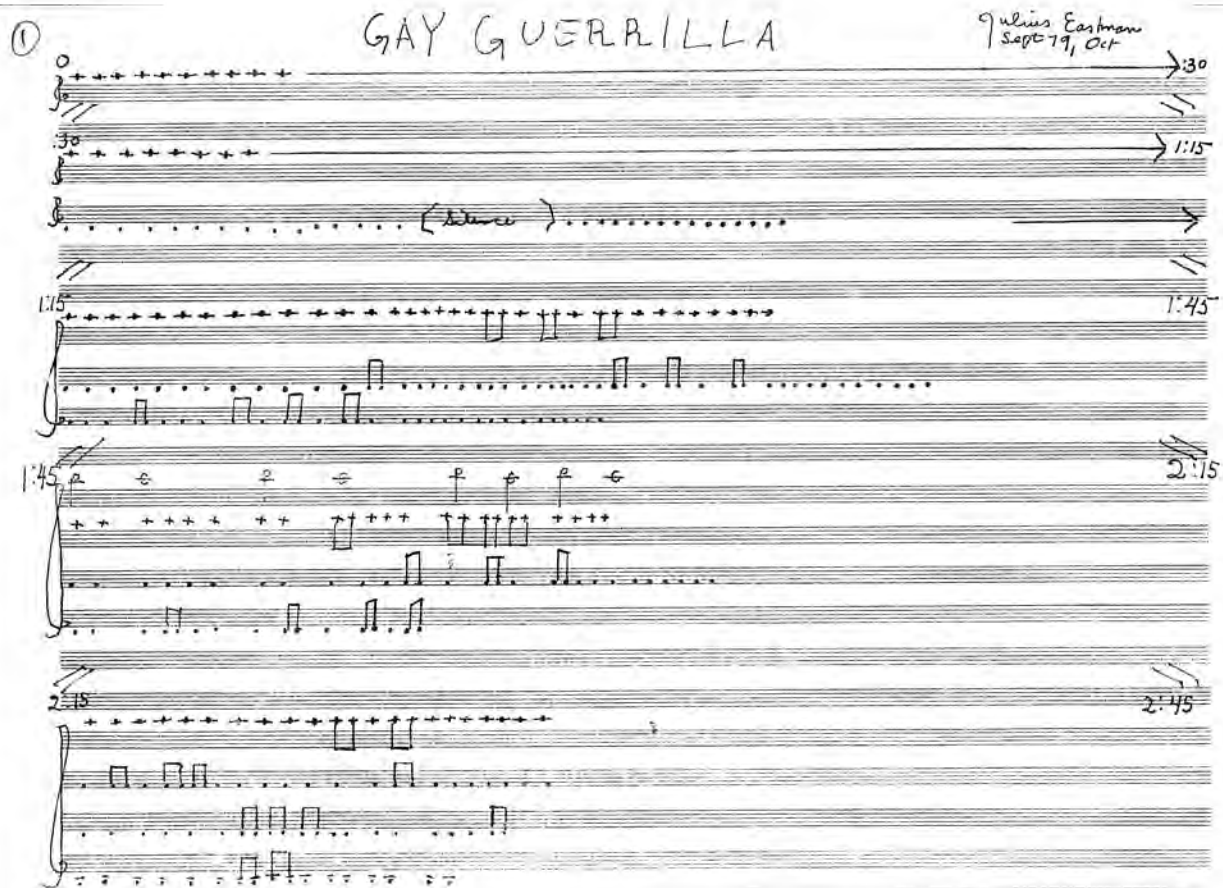
1:30 Play only once

1:50

Gay Guerrilla (1979) stands as Julius Eastman's most powerful tribute to the fight for gay rights. He spoke of the word "guerrilla" glorifying the word "gay." As to why he used the word guerrilla, he said:

"a guerrilla is someone who is in any case sacrificing his life for a point of view and you know if there is a cause, and if it is a great cause those who belong to the cause will sacrifice their blood, because without blood there is no cause. So therefore that is the reason I use "gay guerrilla" in hopes that I might be one of them, if called upon."

Gay Guerrilla stands as one of Eastman's most memorable compositions, and one of the best examples of his "organic" music, a decidedly minimalist additive process, yet different from those of Reich and Glass. The form of the piece is loosely structured as a chorale fantasia, a form which is based on a Lutheran chorale. Chorale fantasias are so powerful because they are easy to memorize, and can be a powerful tool for unification. In Eastman's case he chooses *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* and uses it as a call to rise up and overcome oppression. The melody emerges out of the midst of chaos and becomes the climax of the piece.



*Crazy N****r* (1978) is the first work of Julius Eastman written using his process to create “organic music.” The longest of the three works, *Crazy N****r* also makes use of Eastman’s vertical additive process in the most transparent way. He explained his process for creating organic music during his introduction at Northwestern University in 1980.

“The third part of any part, so the third measure or the third section, the third part, has to contain all of the information of the first two parts and then go on from there. So therefore unlike Romantic music or Classical music where you have different sections and you have these sections, for instance are in great contrast to the first section or to some other section in the piece, these pieces, they’re not exactly perfect, but there is an attempt to make every section contain all the information of the

previous section or else take out information at a gradual and logical rate."

Eastman breaks up the piece into ten sections. He uses a vertical additive process to add and subtract pitches resulting in increasingly dense harmonies. Once each section reaches, as Eastman says, a logical conclusion, he resets to a single pitch and begins the process again.

Julius Eastman 78
N.Y.C.

C R A Z Y N

4 Pulses = 92

1:30 3:00

3:00 4:30 6:00

6:00 7:30 9:00

Take this as a guide & continue in the manner


(Silence)

Julius Eastman: Crazy N****r

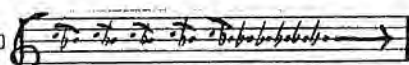
PERFORMANCE GUIDE

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

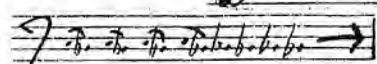
-The work proceeds in blocks of real time. The apprx. duration of each block is indicated in the score in minutes & seconds. e.g. 1:30

-The basic unit of pulse is the darkened whole note. i.e.  4 pulses = 92

-Absolute pitch values are not indicated in the score and thus must be supplied at the musical discretion of the performer. i.e. any passage may be realized in any register.

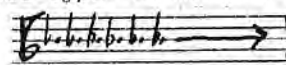
e.g. the notated passage at 3:00 

might be realized as 

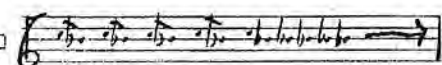
or as  etc.

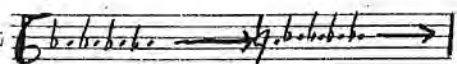
-Each system or time block contains a given number of musical thoughts(lines). Within any given block, one distinct thought(line) occurs per staff. (with exceptions at 16:30 & 22:45, see #3 below)

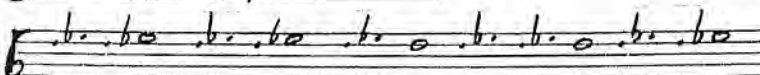
-The work contains 3 general types of musical thought(line):

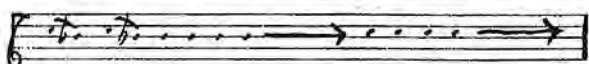
1. Pulse: e.g. at 1:30  realized as written (with octave displacements and/or doublings)

2. Lines with a motivic, phrase-like or melodic component:



e.g. at 3:00 

or at 4:30 


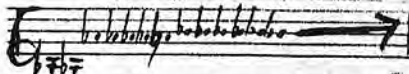
or at 6:00 

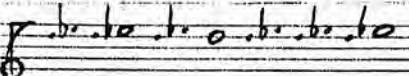
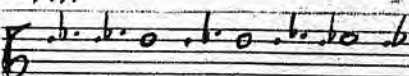
or at 19:00 

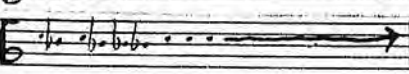
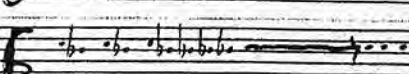
In all of the above examples, the motivic or phrase-like component of the line is always preserved. However, the general shape of each line as a whole might constantly change as indicated by the following sample realizations of the above examples:

3:00 as  or as  etc.

2.

4:30 as  or as 

6:00 as  or as 

19:00 as  or as 

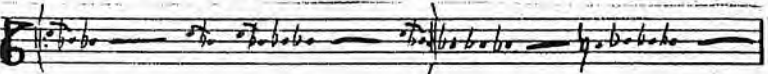
3. Melodic Lines:

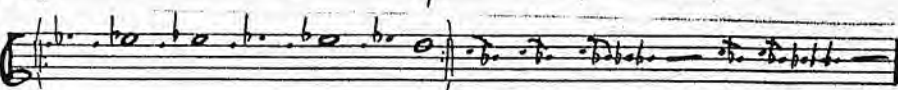
The systems at 16:30 and 22:45 each contain a single long melodic phrase. The phrase will repeat several times (given the duration of the system) but must always be played from beginning to end. Canonical imitation (at the octave or multiples thereof) can occur at any point in the phrase. e.g.

16:30 

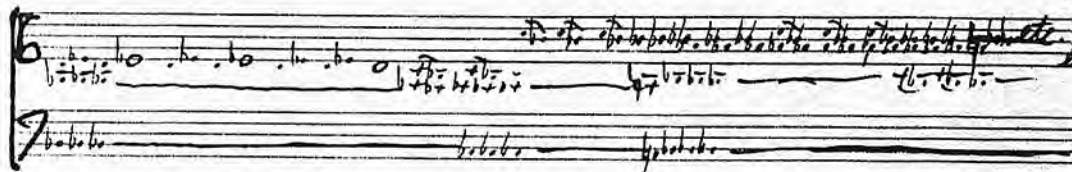
REALIZATIONS

Within a given time block, several lines might be realized consecutively.

e.g. at 6:00  or

6:00 

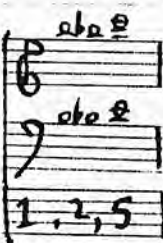
Within a given time block several lines might be realized consecutively and/or simultaneously. e.g. at 6:00



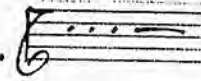
RYTHMIC NOTATION AT 34:00

From 34:00 to the conclusion (53:50), the rhythmic shape of the work is defined and notated by a simple number system. Each measure of each system is prefaced by one, several or a series of whole numbers.

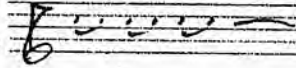
e.g. at 36:00



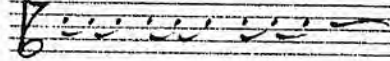
The number 1 signifies the basic pulse. i.e.



the number 2 signifies

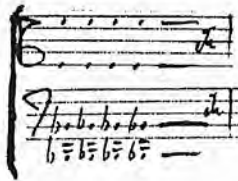


the number 3



and so on.

Beginning at 34:00, there are pitch and rhythmic arrays associated with each time block. The player should select and perform only one rhythmic realization per measure. (exception at 39:45)
The pitch arrays are conceived vertically i.e., within each measure horizontal motion is incidental. The following are 3 sample realizations of 36:00-



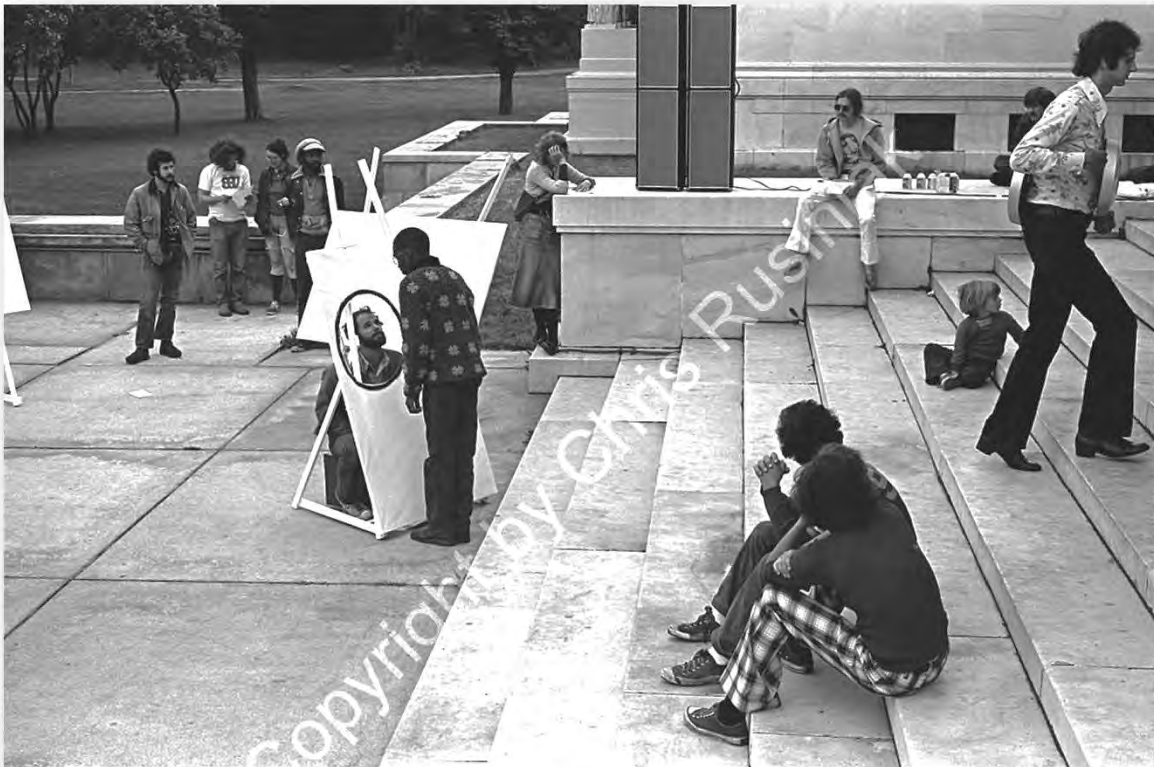
© John Smigielski

Please note: the essays by Joseph Kubera and Bobby Previte were solicited by Renée Levine-Packer as research for the book, *Gay Guerrilla: Julius Eastman and His Music*, edited by Renée Levine-Packer and Mary Jane Leach.

Chris Rusiniak's Photographs of Julius Eastman

An additional component of this exhibition is the inclusion of rarely-seen photographs by a former resident of Buffalo, Chris Rusiniak. In addition to the photographs inserted in the exhibit text, the following photographs were on display in the Music Library.

One sequence of photographs was taken at an S.E.M. Ensemble event on the steps of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in the 1970s.



Julius Eastman at an event on the steps of the
Albright-Knox Art Gallery in the 1970s

Photograph by Chris Rusiniak



Julius Eastman and Petr Kotik painting on the steps of the
Albright-Knox Art Gallery in the 1970s
Photograph by Chris Rusiniak



Julius Eastman painting at an event on the steps
of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in the 1970s

Photograph by Chris Rusiniak

Another sequence of photographs was taken at an S.E.M. event at the
Griffis Sculpture Park in East Otto, New York,



Julius Eastman and friends at Griffis Sculpture Park
in East Otto, New York

Photograph by Chris Rusiniak



**Julius Eastman at Griffis Sculpture Park
in East Otto, New York**
Photograph by Chris Rusiniak



Julius Eastman entering the pond at
Griffis Sculpture Park, East Otto, New York

Photograph by Chris Rusiniak



Julius Eastman in the pond at Griffis Sculpture Park, East Otto, New York

Photograph by Chris Rusiniak



Julius Eastman in the pond at Griffis Sculpture Park, East Otto, New York

Photograph by Chris Rusiniak



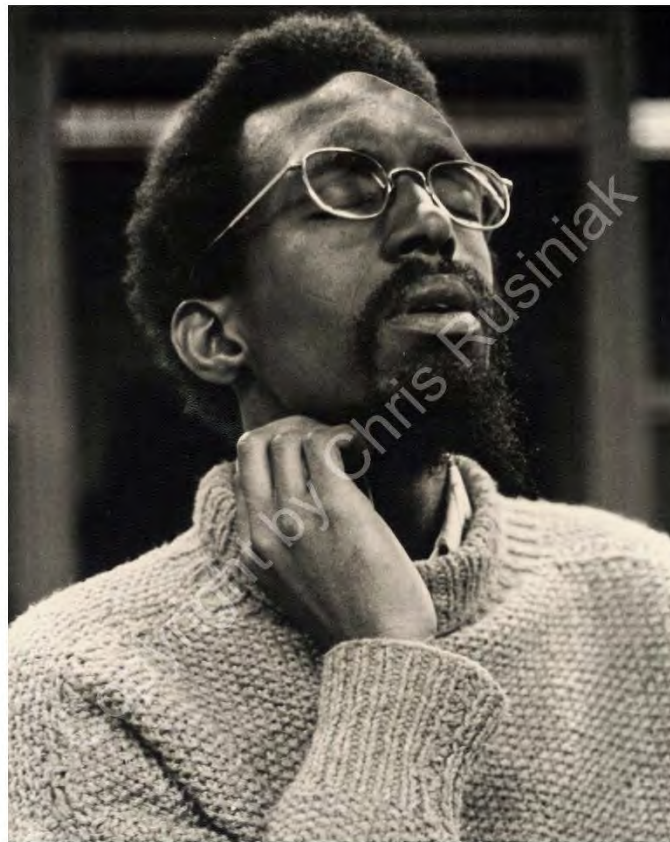
Julius Eastman in the pond at Griffis Sculpture Park, East Otto, New York

Photograph by Chris Rusiniak



Petr Kotik and Julius Eastman performing at two pianos

Photograph by Chris Rusiniak



Portrait of Julius Eastman
Photograph by Chris Rusiniak

Chris Rusiniak is an American photographer and event organizer who worked in Buffalo, New York, in the 1970s. In 1974, Chris co-organized the month long events in “Experiments in Art and Technology Exhibit 11011011 Broadcast 887574” at the University at Buffalo. As coordinator of the S.E.M. Ensemble, of which Julius Eastman was a founding member, she developed an interest in documenting musical performances. In 1976, she interviewed Petr Kotik, director of the S.E.M. Ensemble about his creative process. “Interview” was also translated into French and published for the performance of Many Many Women at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, A.R.C 2, February 1977. In the mid-70s, Chris took up residence at 30 Essex Street in a converted ice factory/warehouse. While there, she

participated in the beginnings of Hallwalls, a new venue for avant-garde artists.

In addition, her photographs of Julius Eastman have appeared in an article by Tim Tetzner in Spex für Popkultur, no 346, July/August 2013 and at the London Contemporary Music Festival's celebration In Search of Julius Eastman in December, 2016.

Contact information: crusiniaktucson@gmail.com.