



ITHACA SOUNDING 2020

jan 30 – feb 2

A festival &
symposium of
(mostly) piano
music by Ithacans
past & present

Julius Eastman
Sarah Hennies
Robert Palmer
Ann Silsbee
David Borden



Greetings and welcome to *Ithaca Sounding 2020*! Over the next four days we celebrate the keyboard music of five composers for whom Ithaca was, or still is, home: Julius Eastman, Sarah Hennies, Robert Palmer, Ann Silsbee, and David Borden, whose collective careers and reputations span the better part of the past century. We look forward to connecting and mediating their musical practices and histories through a series of concerts, discussions, presentations, and workshops. As the various local waterways wind through greater Ithaca’s famed gorges to feed the iconic lake Cayuga, so too do we wind our way through the music and practices of these representatives of Ithaca’s renowned modern classical and contemporary musical personae.

Moreover, this weekend is an opportunity to consider and investigate the effects of their individual and shared streams of history—at times uncannily intertwined and at others, incongruously opposed—and their stylistic, theoretical, and socio-political influences on North American musical practices and thought. From academic modernism and minimalism to queer experimentalism and the contemporary avant-garde, we will explore, discuss, and *experience* their music through the lenses of musical hermeneutics, race and gender studies, aesthetics, and queer theory, both within and around the composition/improvisation dialectic.

Entering the next twenty years of this new century and millennium, we face local and global challenges both tediously familiar and jarringly fresh. It is worth appreciating how the town of Ithaca, its institutions,

and its community have engaged with similar issues, questions, and problems old and new, as a nexus of musical creativity and thought, both for itself and for the country and world at-large.

I would like to thank the numerous talented and brilliant performers and presenters involved in bringing the work of these five composers to life, both in musical performance and equally resonant ideas and scholarship. Special thanks go to my advisor Xak Bjerken for his generous inspiration, encouragement, and advice in creating and planning this festival.

Additional thanks to Laurel Gilmer, Kiko Nobusawa, Roger Moseley, Annette Richards, Sara Haefeli, and Ellie Hisama who all contributed their unique and invaluable insights, assistance, and time with the many moving parts: creative and logistic. Thanks to Laura Chichisan who created the beautiful art and design for the posters and this program book. Finally, this festival would not be possible without the support from the following organizations: Cornell Center for Historical Keyboards, Cornell Council for the Arts, Cornell Society for the Humanities, Humanities Corridor of Central New York, Cornell Department of Music, Ithaca College School of Music, Johnson Museum of Art, and Buffalo Street Books.

Richard Valitutto

Festival coordinator
DMA student in Performance Practice
Cornell University

Festival Schedule

THURSDAY, JAN 30

12:30–1:15 pm | Cornell University, Lincoln Hall B20

Concert: *In Search of Robert Palmer*
a solo piano lecture-recital by Adam Tandler

4:30–6 pm | Cornell University, Lincoln Hall 124

Workshop: *Decolonizing the Curriculum*
with Sara Haefeli

7–8 pm | Cornell University, Johnson Museum Lobby

Concert: *Semi-Occluded Vocal Tract*
Richard Valitutto plays Sarah Hennies’s hour-long work SOVT (2017) for solo prepared piano

FRIDAY, JAN 31

10 am–12 pm | Cornell University, Lincoln Hall 124

Panel: *Listening Locally: Intersectionality and Contemporary Music*
a discussion on festival themes with Matthew Mendez,
Frederick Cruz Nowell, and Isaac Jean-François

5–6:30 pm | Ithaca College, Whalen Center for Music, Iger Lecture Hall

Lecture/Demo: “*A Persistent Obsession with Identity*”
with composer and percussionist Sarah Hennies, hosted by Sara Haefeli

8–10 pm | Cornell University, Barnes Hall

Concert: *Letters, Stories, and Journeys for 1 & 2 Pianos*
solos and duos by Julius Eastman, Ann Silsbee, David Borden, and Robert Palmer

SATURDAY, FEB 1

10 am–12 pm | Cornell University, Lincoln Hall B21

Lectures: *Julius Eastman’s Heterological Perspectives & Queer Practices*
paper presentations by Ellie Hisama (Columbia) & Matthew Mendez (Yale)

2–3 pm | Cornell University, Lincoln Hall B20

Concert: “*That Which is Fundamental:*” Julius Eastman works for 4 pianos
performed by Joseph Kubera, Adam Tandler, David Friend, and Richard Valitutto

6–6:30 pm | Ithaca College, Whalen Center for Music, Hockett Hall

Preconcert lecture by Ellie Hisama

7–9:30 pm | Ithaca College, Whalen Center for Music, Hockett Hall

Concert: *Julius Eastman: Joy Boy / Femenine* • Festival Finale
performed by Sarah Hennies, Richard Valitutto, and musicians from CU, IC, and Ithaca

SUNDAY, FEB 2

12–2 pm | Buffalo Street Books

Reading: *Poems and Memoirs by Musicians (who also Write)*
poems by Ann Silsbee and memoirs of David Borden & Adam Tandler

Thursday

CONCERT 1: MIDDAY MUSIC IN SEARCH OF ROBERT PALMER

12:30–1:15 | Cornell University, Lincoln Hall, room B20

Robert Palmer:
Three Epigrams (1957–58)
Second Sonata (1942/48)
Toccata Ostinato (1945)
Adam Tendler, piano

Three Epigrams

Palmer would go on to compose upward of 13 Epigrams, the last dating from 1990, but these are the three “well-constructed” (Alvin K. Fossner) movements, published by Peer, that composer Julius Eastman performed at his 1966 Town Hall recital. Joseph Kubera tells us that Eastman had “a great regard for Palmer” and it is fascinating to imagine what the attraction of Palmer’s music—guardedly witty, abstract, and largely conservative—might have been for the younger composer. Eastman’s music, after all, is currently enjoying a revival thanks to a radical frankness of sexuality, emotion, and politics, and an experimental aesthetic charged with raw rock energy, qualities that seem diametrically opposed to the ethos motivating these Epigrams.

What drew Julius Eastman to these pieces? A simple and unsatisfying answer lies in Palmer’s discipline as a composer—these pieces are indeed “well constructed”—but we also celebrate Eastman’s music for the very rigidity of his rhythms, for the obsessive energy of his repetitions, and for his incisive, ironic wit, and it is tempting to imagine that he found a kindred spirit here.

Second Sonata

The Second Sonata [the first passage begun in 1942, and then abandoned before Palmer completed the rest of the work in 1948] is an exercise in balance. From his correspondence with John Kirkpatrick, who premiered this piece—and with whom Palmer collaborated closely on so many of these piano works—we know that Palmer decided against using the formal structure of a Prelude and Fugue for this sonata, but nevertheless retained the musical ideals represented by the opposition of “prelude” vs. “fugue” as a sort of guiding notion for the diptych.

While thus resisting strict fugal form, the Second Sonata plays out the contrast between these horizontal and vertical aspects of musical organization, balancing the two ideals not only between the two movements but within them. The first movement opens by luxuriating in widely spaced, slow-moving modal harmonies, strumming arpeggios to explore a rhythmic idea in 5/8. But after this “vertical” introduction, the introduction of a lyrical melody soon develops into quasi-fugal counterpoint, each statement of the melody being imitated at increasingly close intervals before dissolving again into those ringing arpeggios.

Conversely, the second movement opens with an unmistakably “horizontal” energy, opening with an octatonic melody whose curves all but spell out the words “fugue subject”—but the movement develops according to a much freer logic than a strict fugal form, breaking down into aggressively chordal writing and then into interludes of lyrical, largely diatonic 5/4 passages that recall the serenity of the opening movement.

Toccata Ostinato

The specifics of Palmer’s style can be defined, like anything, by its boundaries: What is kept in; what is kept out. Composed for William Kappell, the *Toccata Ostinato* has been referred to more than once as a “boogie-woogie” movement in 13/8, but this label seems intriguingly inadequate when one compares the movement to the music of peers like Conlon Nancarrow, whose own experiments with boogie-woogie may more audibly represent the vernacular style.

As the title suggests, the pianist plays as if fixated on a short musical cycle in the left hand, and that ostinato figure likewise recalls the structure of vernacular dancing music. And the cross-relations of the scale Palmer uses often hint at the “blue notes” of Black American music. The eight eighth notes in a measure of American music are often syncopated according to the 3 + 3 + 2 “clave” rhythm that undergirds so much music of the African diaspora; Palmer’s meter sees that 3 + 3 + 2 and raises it by another 3 + 2, as if writing for a swing dancer with two left feet.

While Palmer’s style can easily assimilate the syncopated cross-rhythms of Afro-American music, it must reject the foursquare meters of the American vernacular in favor of changing and “complex” meters. And while he hints at blues tonalities, even shifting the tonal center of the melody from C to F in a nod at the I-IV change that opens the standard 12-bar blues progression of boogie-woogie music, Palmer must break from the relative stability of these opening sections for a searching, contrapuntal development section by way of contrast, to satisfy a distinctly classical need for formal balance.

— Program notes by Daniel Johnson (2019), adapted

WORKSHOP DECOLONIZING THE CURRICULUM A WORKSHOP WITH SARA HAEFELI (IC)

4:30–6pm | Cornell University, Lincoln Hall, room 124

The field of musicology is just now coming to terms with its exclusionary, colonialist history. But what, if not the canon, is it that we are supposed to teach? I propose that in order to decolonize the traditional curriculum, we must do away with the typical iterative study of style periods, genres, [genius] composers, and [masterpiece] musical examples. Instead, we must shift focus from teaching content to teaching musicological methods. In this interactive session, learn about a new curricular framework centered on musical contexts that encourage, support, inspire, or require music. A contextual study of music history opens up pathways of inquiry that are inclusive and non-hierarchical; it flattens dichotomies (such as high/low or European/indigenous); and it suggests that communities of performers, audiences, patrons, inventors, and technologies shape musical practices more than do individual composers. This session will explore a case study methodology that I have developed that puts students at the center of the process of inquiry and invites them to work collaboratively from areas of strength.

— Sara Haefeli

Workshop participants should read Loren Kajikawa’s book chapter, “The Possessive Investment in Classical Music” and Robin James’s book chapter, “How Not to Listen to Lemonade.”

CONCERT 2: “SEMI-OCCLUDED VOCAL TRACT”

7–8 pm | Cornell University, Johnson Museum Lobby

Sarah Hennies: *SOVT* (2017)
Richard Valitutto, piano

SOVT (semi-occluded vocal tract) refers to a vocal relaxation technique wherein one speaks with one’s mouth partially closed, usually closed around a straw. The simple backpressure of the straw allows the vocal folds to vibrate more easily and with reduced physical exertion. The technique helps rejuvenate tired voices, and warms up the human instrument. Unbeknownst to me when I chose the title, SOVT is also a military abbreviation for System Operability Verification Test. For the duration, the piano is muted with reusable adhesive blu tac across almost all the strings. This softens the instrument’s timbre and increases the presence of sympathetic vibrations as each string is more connected to those adjacent to it.

— Sarah Hennies

Friday

PANEL LISTENING LOCALLY: INTERSECTIONALITY AND CONTEMPORARY MUSIC A DISCUSSION ON FESTIVAL THEMES

10 am–12 pm | Cornell University, Lincoln Hall 124

Facilitated by guest musicologist Matthew Mendez (Yale), and featuring participants Frederick Cruz Nowell (Cornell), and Isaac Jean-François (Columbia).

LECTURE/DEMO “A PERSISTENT OBSESSION WITH IDENTITY” WITH COMPOSER AND PERCUSSIONIST SARAH HENNIES, HOSTED BY SARA HAEFELI

5–6:30 pm | Ithaca College, Whalen Center for Music,
Iger Lecture Hall

Join us for a talk with the internationally-renowned, Ithaca-based composer and percussionist Sarah Hennies. She will discuss her work that explores a persistent obsession with identity—specifically transfeminine identity—and how she has come to terms with subconscious attempts to enact authority and control over a body and identity that she did not understand. This exploration of identity has allowed her work to expand both musically and conceptually, using the vast spectrum of “queerness” as a frequent point of departure for a wide variety of musical situations.

— Sara Haefeli

The Friday program continues on the next page

CONCERT 3
LETTERS, STORIES, AND
JOURNEYS FOR 1 & 2 PIANOS

8–10 pm | Cornell University, Barnes Hall

Julius Eastman: *Piano 2* (1986)
Joseph Kubera

David Borden:
“For Joe Kubera” from *Earth Journeys* (2014)
Joseph Kubera

Robert Palmer:
Sonata for Two Pianos (1944)
Joseph Kubera & Adam Tendler

— intermission —

Ann Silsbee:
Letter From a Field Biologist (1979)
Andrew Zhou & Richard Valitutto

David Borden:
The Continuing Story of Counterpoint, Part 11 (1986)
Xak Bjerken & Richard Valitutto

Julius Eastman: *Piano 2*

Piano 2, a three-movement, fifteen-minute work, has no meters, bar lines, or tempo indications. Kubera recently recounted the following anecdote about his introduction to Eastman’s *Piano 2*:

Julius showed up unannounced first thing early one morning at my front door with his current boyfriend, asked whether I had any scotch—“Kuuu-ber-aaa... got any scotch?”—and then proceeded to sit down at my old Weber grand and play this piece for me. That was my introduction to this piece.

Kubera has played *Piano 2* since at least the 1990s.... Acquaintances since the 1960s in Buffalo, Eastman enlisted Kubera into his ensemble performances as soon as the pianist landed in New York City, at venues like The Kitchen, and the Third Street Music Settlement. Of Eastman and *Piano 2*, Kubera also has this to say:

He could be unpredictable... but creatively he’s very interesting. These pieces, even though they involve certain freedoms, seem to be very carefully worked out.... It is demanding in that it is all over the keyboard, and you have to make sense of the big shapes, and so on.... Most of the piece is just about his very forceful personality—the insistence of these continuous sixteenth-notes. They form big arcs and there are big melodies that appear, overarching melodies of sorts. Some patterns are repeated; the opening motive comes back again and again, providing definition points.

In contrast to the outer movements, Kubera writes that the second movement presents a “bittersweet, bleak, and austere landscape.” The wide emotional range of *Piano 2* runs from manic to somber.... here Kubera’s greatest challenges are endurance and accuracy. In the words of Kyle Gann, who closely followed Eastman’s music and performance activities:

Eastman was an energizing underground figure, one whose forms are clear, whose methods were powerful and persuasive, and whose thinking was supremely musical. There was no timidity or theoretical obscurity to his music—it cut to the chase. It did eschew anything superficial or elegant.

— Amy Beal

David Borden: “For Joe Kubera” from *Earth Journeys*

My variation on Happy Birthday for Joe Kubera is from 2014. I have been composing variations on this melody for over thirty years and there are now more than 180 of them. When I composed this particular variation I had rarely written pieces for solo piano. This got me to writing preludes and fugues for solo piano and there are now two published volumes of them. I wrote this variation for Mr. Kubera because I admired the work he had done for composers of the current era, especially Julius Eastman. It’s a simple piece for a complex man.

— David Borden

Robert Palmer: *Sonata for Two Pianos*

Critic Paul Rosenfeld described Robert Palmer as being less of a Bach than a Handel, and insofar as Handel–Bach as a dialectic is more useful for musical analysis than Meyers–Briggs or the signs of the zodiac, it is tempting to recall this comparison in examining the three movements of this sonata. Palmer always delights in polyphony and imitative counterpoint, but here, he seldom delves too deep for too long before allowing the audience to come up for air.

So much of Palmer’s music demands that the pianist use every finger to communicate a greater density of musical information. But with greater resources at his command, rather than creating music yet more complex than his works for solo piano, Palmer relies heavily on octave doublings, emphasizing and coloring the voices in the score, and thereby lending it greater transparency. This is not pious or academic counterpoint as an end unto itself, but rather as a show of virtuosity for performer and composer, and as a means to delight the ear.

This is another Palmer score that held special appeal for Julius Eastman—he brought it to Joseph Kubera, and it is Eastman’s copy (with Eastman’s fingerings) that Kubera plays from.”

— Daniel Johnson

Ann Silsbee:
Letter From a Field Biologist (1979)

“We were sitting in the middle of a river a few weeks ago eating lunch (on a rock, not in the water) and watching the butterflies. Hundreds of butterflies everywhere: yellow and black tiger swallowtails, some with red spots, and a few red and black ones. At least four or five different kinds, all big, fluttering aimlessly in typical butterfly fashion, or so it seemed at first.

“After watching them for a bit, it became obvious that they were all flying downstream; not that just on the average more were going downstream than up, but every single one would first appear around the bend above us, flutter around for a bit, then a short minute or so later disappear around the bend below. Every single one, no exceptions. A river of butterflies. There must have been an inexhaustible supply of them up there somewhere, unless perhaps they were all flying down the river and back up through the woods, and we were really watching the same butterflies over and over again? I prefer to think of them coming out of some spring high up on the mountainside like the river; a few of them floating down each tributary stream until they converge in a raging torrent of butterflies...”

— unattributed quote from the score’s front matter

David Borden:
The Continuing Story of Counterpoint, Part 11

The Continuing Story of Counterpoint was begun in 1976 and completed in 1987.... [it] began with one simple note-against-note idea and the desire to develop my own contrapuntal language.... I started these pieces with the intention of controlling large structures by composing not only simultaneous melodies that each had their own personality, but in some cases, simultaneous two-handed keyboard parts that could stand alone as solo parts but when combined with the others, lost their individuality to the whole. This idea came from Buckminster Fuller’s definition of synergy: behaviour of whole systems unpredicted by the behavior of any of its

parts taken separately. The pieces are held together by disparate meters (rhythmic elements) that resolve themselves in cycles and for the harmonic content, I use modal scales. The twelve parts are cyclical and refer to themselves in various ways, and all parts contain the basic note-against-note melodic figure in varying degrees....

Part 11 is dedicated to the late Edmund Niemann and derives much of its content from Mr. Niemann’s birthdate, 12/25/45. There are two musical elements: chords and a melodic idea. The duration of the chords and the number of notes in the melody derive from the date. A large portion of this piece is taken up with canons at the unison or octave. The midsection is a two voiced canon accompanied by triads in the upper register and arpeggiated chords in the lower. At first, the upper voice leads, but halfway through the lower voice takes the lead. A series of four voice canons follows, each treated slightly differently in terms of rhythmic entrances and timbre. In general, the canonic entrances follow each other very quickly. On either side of these canons are quotes from Part 1 and Part 3 of *TCSOC*, mixed with new material. During the large outer sections (exposition and recapitulation/coda) there is more canonic treatment of the melodic idea including augmentation and retrograde. The overall structure can be expressed as ABCC1BAA1.

— David Borden

Saturday

LECTURES JULIUS EASTMAN’S HETEROLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES AND QUEER PRACTICES PAPER PRESENTATIONS BY MATTHEW MENDEZ (YALE) & ELLIE HISAMA (COLUMBIA) WITH PREPARED RESPONSES BY LEE KIMURA TYSON & FREDERICK CRUZ NOWELL

10 am–12 pm | Cornell University, Lincoln Hall B21

“A Sort of Philip Glass with Soul:” Julius Eastman’s Heterological Perspectives Matthew Mendez (Yale University)

Though the legacy of composer-vocalist Julius Eastman (1940–90) has recently become the subject of considerable academic and public scrutiny, little work has yet been done on his ties to the expressive practices associated with the African American improvisative tradition. So far, the lion’s share of attention has gone to his self-styled “Nigger Series”—their collective title notwithstanding, scores arguably situatable within a Eurological, pulsed minimalist canon. But in earlier works, Eastman’s “minimalism” had a different valence, a quasi-improvisative, Afrological ethos absorbed from postwar jazz. So committed was he to this ethos that by the mid-1970s, he attempted to rebrand himself as a jazz artist.

Drawing in part on original interviews, my talk presents a reading of one of the key moments in that evolution, Eastman’s *Feminine* [sic] (1974), teasing out the piece’s quasi-improvisative features that, vis-à-vis another, related score, occasioned the epithet “Philip Glass with soul.” Indeed, Eastman eschewed Glass’s cool precision, instead favoring riff-based and citational structures closely connected to what he referred to as jazz’s scope for “instant expressions of feelings.”

Yet Eastman’s artistic production was also nothing if not intersectional, and as a gay man, he was concerned to merge camp performative strategies

with earnest “self-expression”: what Ann Pellegrini (2007) dubs “camp sincerity.” But as George Lewis (1996) notes, the post-Cagean improvisative circles in which Eastman made his name enforced an unspoken ban on “self-expression.” This, I argue, provided the occasion for his estrangement from Eurological practice, in favor of the evening-length, wholly improvised solo piano format, then in vogue due to the success of Keith Jarrett’s *Köln Concert* (among others). In Eastman’s hands, the format, with its “epic,” heightened “romanticism,” became the ideal vehicle for “camp sincerity,” allowing him to realize ideas first broached in pieces like *Feminine*.

In attending to Eastman’s artistic production, I aim to help reorient the histories of jazz and minimalism, pointing up Afrological genealogies too often underplayed in Eurological accounts of the latter. As for Eastman, however, former colleagues recall the black jazz community treating his homosexuality with hostility, rendering such reorienting at once tragic and ironic. For these reasons, I propose a new rubric—*heterological* improvisative practice—the better to account for those aspects of Eastman’s artistic production that, characteristically, fell “betwixt and between.”

“A Practice of Refusal:” Hearing Queer Black Visuality in Julius Eastman’s Work Ellie M. Hisama (Columbia University)

This talk considers the ways in which music performance serves as a site for practicing refusal as enacted by Julius Eastman, whose dazzling work as a composer was much less known during his lifetime than his luminous performances of compositions by figures in the vibrant new music scene. His subjectivity as a queer African American composer and musician and the riveting and sometimes disturbing accounts of his experiences strongly resonate with many twenty-first century listeners, musicians, scholars, and activists eager to excavate the work of artists outside the Western art music canon.

Drawing upon Tina Campt’s recent work, I argue that Eastman’s avant-garde composition and performance marks an ongoing practice of refusal, in which he brilliantly engineered the medium of sound composition to be commensurate with his understanding of “black being,” to draw from Arthur Jafa’s provocative remarks about the medium of cinema. As a queer African American musician who was working in the largely white and closeted field of new music composition in the 1960s and 1970s, Eastman defied many conventions of the classical music world which did not always embrace him. I suggest that we can hear queer Black viscosity and see queer Black aurality in the emerging, deep excavations of Eastman’s work that crosscut multiple dimensions—of notated music, improvisation, recorded sound, photographs and films, prose writings, and oral histories.

CONCERT 4 “THAT WHICH IS FUNDAMENTAL” JULIUS EASTMAN WORKS FOR 4 PIANOS 2–3 pm | Cornell University, Lincoln Hall B20

Julius Eastman: *Evil Nigger* (1979) *Gay Guerrilla* (1979) Joseph Kubera, Adam Tendler, David Friend & Richard Valitutto

The resurrection of Julius Eastman’s music might be counted as the first musical miracle of the twenty-first century. Born in 1940 and having grown up in Ithaca, Eastman passed away in 1990 after a troubled period including bouts of homelessness and erratic behavior that had left the state of his musical career and the physical effects of his compositions in serious disarray. Thanks to the dedicated work of musicians and musicologists, many of Eastman’s scores have been recovered and, following the release of a large-scale album of archival recordings of his work (*Unjust Malaise*) in 2005 and a book about his life and work (*Gay Guerrilla*) in 2015, a Julius Eastman renaissance is now in full effect.

Evil Nigger and *Gay Guerrilla* are widely considered to be two of Eastman’s most important works. While Eastman’s compositional aesthetic was heterogeneous, both of these works are large-scale examples of what he termed “organic music.” This formal concept of structuring a work by using an additive approach to harmony and density can be thought of in relation to other approaches to musical Minimalism that were flourishing in Downtown New York City’s experimental music scene in the 1970s. The confrontational titles of the works are indicative of the intersectional complexities of identity with which Eastman was faced as a gay, African-American experimental musician working in twentieth-century America and his determination to confront oppression head on in his creative work as well as in his personal life.

Both of these works can be performed by a multiple of any instrument and are notated in an idiosyncratic, time-based system that is unique to Eastman. Most famously, both of these works (along with *Crazy Nigger*) were featured on the concert performed by an ensemble of four pianists at Eastman’s Northwestern University residency in 1980 which led to unrest among the student population. As a condition of allowing the concert to go on, Eastman was required to provide a verbal introduction explaining his decision to make use of such inflammatory language in the titles of his works. In those remarks, Eastman stated that “a guerrilla is someone who is ... sacrificing his life for a point of view.” While the circumstances of Eastman’s untimely death were grievous, the resurgence of performances of and scholarship about his work today allow his unyieldingly creative “point of view” to persist.

— David Friend

CONCERT 5: FESTIVAL FINALE JULIUS EASTMAN: JOY BOY / FEMENINE PRECONCERT LECTURE 6–6:30 PM BY ELLIE HISAMA 7–9:30 pm | Ithaca College, Whalen Center for Music, Hockett Hall

Julius Eastman: *Joy Boy* (1974) Chuck Burch, Emily Gustafson, Andrew Hudson-Sabens, Amy Penick, Steve Spinelli, and Richard Valitutto

Julius Eastman: *Feminine* (1974) Sarah Hennies (vibraphone), Richard Valitutto (piano), Juliana Pepinsky (flute), Rick Faria (clarinet), Steven Banks (saxophone), Sara Haefeli (cello), Desmond Bratton (contrabass) and Mike Truesdell (sleighbells)

After Eastman died a quietly tragic death at the age of 49 in 1990, nearly 25 years went by where it seemed he was on his way to vanishing completely from the collective creative consciousness. Kyle Gann’s obituary in *The Village Voice*, contrite and elegiac in its belatedness, was published eight months later. But Eastman’s many idiosyncrasies as a creative person (not to mention his undeniably proud identity as an African-American effeminate gay in a world dominated by straight white male privilege) problematized his easy transition into the contemporary classical music record of posterity. Thankfully the vitality and fecundity of Eastman—concert pianist of all repertoires, virtuoso opera singer, composer, actor, dancer, painter, and all-around creative polymath—is now being acknowledged for his crucial contributions to American art. His scores and related documentation are being recovered and preserved with increasing momentum and urgency. Most importantly, his work is being rediscovered, performed, and experienced by musicians and audiences all over the world. Because one doesn’t really listen to an Eastman work as much as one *experiences* it. The seismic shift Eastman caused in the canon of American experimentalism is finally being fully felt, an aftershock even greater than the initial quake of his already uncontainable musical persona.

Call it what you will: archival fate, luck, or the too-late come-uppance of a stifled creative genius ahead of his time. Thanks to the exhaustive efforts initially spearheaded by Mary Jane Leach—composer, “accidental musicologist” (her term), and Eastman’s longtime friend and colleague—the works and legacy of Eastman are being gradually salvaged piecemeal. The celebration of discoveries and recoveries are equalled only by the sobering reality that a good deal is most likely irretrievably gone. There’s a score manuscript here, a concert recording there, but the majority of his sizable oeuvre was literally scattered to the wind by the New York City police during an eviction from his East Village apartment in early 1982, leading to years of homelessness and professional floundering. Ironically, this personal life rupture occurred amidst Eastman’s most promising years: between the release of prominent recording projects featuring his abilities as keyboardist and singer with Meredith Monk (*Dolmen Music*) and

Arthur Russell (*Dinosaur L's 24 → 24 Music*), and one year after his notable (notorious?) composer-performer residency at Northwestern University, where three large-scale, proto-minimalist works for 4 grand pianos were composed and premiered: *Evil Nigger*, *Crazy Nigger*, and *Gay Guerrilla*.

If you already knew of Eastman before tonight, it was likely the direct or indirect result of hearing or at least hearing about that NWU performance, via the live concert archival recordings from 1981, which was released in 2005 on New World Records as *Unjust Malaise*, a 3-CD set alongside other landmark Eastman chamber works. The titles of these pieces and the inclusion of Eastman's recorded prefatory remarks, where he patiently and sagely explains the language therein, have been oft-discussed, a sort of makeshift manifesto for a composer for whom the written and recorded record provides none. And while the arresting, polemical nature of these works' titles is notable in its own respect, the musical inventiveness and sheer audacity of the pieces' creative power is equally compelling. Both from the audience's perspective of sheer visceral experience (have you heard four pianists pound away for an hour straight?) and the analytical assessment of their carefully designed formal structures, Eastman's signature style is on full display at the seeming height of his powers, deftly weaving improvisational, aleatoric, and minimalist/pop techniques into one monolithic arc.

The works on tonight's program, *Joy Boy* and *Feminine*, were composed in 1974, a transitional year for Eastman in many respects, and they offer first glimpses into his creative approach arrived at by those piano pieces. He began incorporating large-scale, slowly shifting musical textures into what were once spare, enigmatic, and mercurial scores, sometimes employing pop-music idiomatic references (such as the disco-inflected exuberant riffs in *Stay On It*) and greater amounts of performer improvisation within controlled harmonic structures. Also, his titles grew increasingly uncompromising and provocative, centered on asserting his queer black identity, literally forcing the issue into the spotlight and, moreover, onto the printed program, poster, and marquee.

In the early '70s, Eastman's diverse compositional experiments could be summed up as pluralistic and avant-garde, churning out a wide variety of works that all fell under the umbrella of Euro-American experimentalism, in the vein of John Cage, Morton Feldman, and Earle Brown. This was during his few years of residency with the Creative Associates at SUNY Buffalo (directed by the luminous Lukas Foss) as a performer and composer, which eventually ended abruptly in 1975 when Eastman moved to New York City. The decision to move could have simply been Eastman's desire to seek divergent creative paths that spoke more to his interests in jazz improvisation, multidisciplinary theatricality, and a political activism sparked by the national news and uproar over the Attica prison riots. Or more salaciously, it could've been the result of a falling out with John Cage, after the venerable experimentalist publicly scolded Eastman for "misinterpreting" one of Cage's more open-ended pieces from *Songbooks*. Cage's uncharacteristically angry act and the words he used (which were recorded at the time) are hard to read with our contemporary minds as anything other than coded racism and amidst a kind of homonormative privilege, a rejection of Eastman's blackness, queerness, and sheer audacity in the mind of an "establishment experimentalist". In American classical culture, even with its fair share of white gay men, Eastman's ever-present bawdy queerness and eventually his overt political agenda was certainly not commonplace, especially when viewed against the quietly homosexual "mindfulness" persona of John Cage. From both on and off the stage, anecdotes from Eastman's friends and collaborators consistently reveal a person who reveled in his queer identity so comfortably that he often employed it as an awkward weapon of social subterfuge. By 1974,

these politics of homoeroticism and gender-fluidity—formerly limited to and hidden within the abstract musical material itself via suggestive vocalizations, non-traditional playing techniques, and campy presentational aesthetic—had moved decidedly to the forefront of his compositions; personality metamorphosed to aesthetic.

Thanks to the Norwegian record label Frozen Reeds, we have live recordings of *Joy Boy* and *Feminine* with Eastman himself performing, as singer and pianist, respectively. Evidence exists that the two pieces were often performed on the same concert, and that on more than one occasion Eastman performed in surreal drag attire (an act not limited to the performances of his own music!). His pieces collectively contribute to a re-mythologizing of gender beyond the contemporary heteronormative binary, where Eastman's conflation of gender identities seems to be an intentional upending of traditional assumptions, in personal identity and cultural awareness. Both pieces have a fair amount of open-endedness, but their most tightly controlled element is pitch: performers are constrained to prescribed melodic or harmonic content at any given moment, but they are essentially improvising freely in terms of rhythm and note selection within that parameter (as well as simply whether to play at all). Beyond this compositional similarity, the overall scope and affect of the works could not be more different: *Joy Boy* is brief, frenetic, mercurial, and borders on hilarity. The masculine has thus been recast as flighty, campy, unpredictable, and ephemeral. Instruments and duration for *Joy Boy* are not specified, with chord and small sectional changes cued by the performers ad lib, but the recording of Eastman's performance with three other members of the SEM Ensemble has them singing in falsetto and playing woodwinds for about 9 minutes. In contrast, the numerous expansive sections of *Feminine* are controlled by stopwatch timings, and the score takes at least 63 minutes to perform, depending on how long the final, open-ended section lasts. The persistent vibraphone motive—a 13-beat syncopated fanfare using only two pitches—is unchanging throughout. With a few exceptionally dramatic moments of bitonality, the piece exists entirely in E-flat major, mostly pentatonic, eschewing the leading tones which would make the music feel like it's "going somewhere" harmonically speaking. The melodic material changes very gradually: Eastman adds or subtracts a note or two or changes/adds octaves every few minutes, and the rhythmic density increases or decreases often on the scale of *tens* of minutes at a time. In its first several minutes, the music seems too self-same, almost monotonous, but the meditative profundity of *Feminine* is balanced and decorated by a constantly and freely improvising piano-part, and eventually the sum-total reveals lush, ecstatic textures where single tones seem to disappear into a rapturous harmonic ocean, wave after wave. This confident, tidal inexorability is later varied and anchored by calls-to-action from the piano and bass instruments, followed by blasted, dissonant, insistent responses from the full band. In contrast with the naive, youthful "masculine" of *Joy Boy*, the "feminine" now occupies its place as an eternal, grounded, creative force.

In 1979, Eastman published a pithy op-ed in *EAR Magazine*, "The Composer As Weakling". In this exhortation to modern-day performers and composers alike, Eastman urges musicians to transcend the received hierarchy and narratives of Western art music and scolds them for their collective lapse into specialization and creative quarantining, with the brunt of his invective focused on the composer "birthing music in his lonely room". While the male pronoun seemed to be used throughout for writerly convention's sake, in the final paragraphs, Eastman's sexual politics and aesthetic ideals coalesce in a poetic conflation and alternation of gendered pronouns: "The composer is therefore enjoined to accomplish the following: she must establish himself as a major instrumentalist, he must

not wait upon a descending being, and she must become an interpreter... and give a fresh new view of the known and unknown classics." While the specialist composer "he" is regarded as antiquated and weak, Eastman freely switches to "she" pronouns with the pronouncement of renewed vitality and relevance to the musical culture. Before it became a hashtag or a meme, it would seem that Eastman was already asserting: "The Future is Female."

As an ensemble, albeit posthumously, our collaboration with Eastman encourages us to bring to bear an exuberant abandon in unbridled spontaneous creativity. We grapple with a constantly evolving performance practice that includes styles and interpretive modes from a spectrum of modern day genres. And we are required to deeply consider the crucial intersectionality of Eastman's musical legacy and the immediacy it carries with it, necessitating awareness and compassion concerning issues that have become even more increasingly relevant as we enter the third decade of our 21st-century world.

— Richard Valitutto

Sunday

**READING
POEMS AND MEMOIRS BY
MUSICIANS (WHO ALSO WRITE)
POEMS BY ANN SILSBEE AND MEMOIRS OF
DAVID BORDEN & ADAM TENDLER**

12–2 pm | Buffalo Street Books

The poems of the late Cornell alumna Ann Silsbee and the unpublished memoirs of long-time Ithaca local David Borden are featured alongside NYC-based pianist Adam Tandler's twice published memoirs and autobiographical musings.

Selections of poems will be read from Ann Silsbee's books: *Orioling*, *The Book of Ga*, *The Fullest Tide*, and *Naming the Disappeared*.

David Borden reads selections from his unpublished memoirs *SOUND BITES*.

Adam Tandler reads chance-determined selections from his books *88x50* and *Tidepools*.

Composer Biographies



David Borden (b. 1938) is best known for his work with synthesizers in live performance. He learned synthesizer technique directly from Robert Moog, inventor of the Moog Synthesizer while working independently in the electronic music studio at the R. A. Moog Company in Trumansburg, NY from 1967 to 1971. He formed the world's first synthesizer ensemble, Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Company, in 1969 with the generous support of Mr. Moog. He was also among the first minimalist composers, well before the term was transplanted from the art world to describe the new music. In the 1970s, the ensemble and he collaborated with

performers on acoustic instruments, being among the first to perform electroacoustic music entirely live with no pre-recorded material. His music is best understood as being informed by various traditions of counterpoint found in western music history. He applied Buckminster Fuller's definition of synergy to counterpoint and created a radical approach to contrapuntal technique exemplified most consistently in *The Continuing Story of Counterpoint*. BF's Synergy: "Synergy means behavior of whole systems unpredicted by the behavior of their parts taken separately." Unlike traditional counterpoint that used a monothematic approach so that each part reflected and used the same thematic material, the synergetic approach was opposite, making use of successive counterpoint bound together harmonically with the use of modal scales and rhythmically with a shared pulse. In his later work, he has also been revisiting fugue, canon and other traditional contrapuntal techniques. With his love of jazz and pop music from the 30s to the 60s, his music spans both high and low culture. His ensemble, still active after all these years, performed at the Smithsonian Institution in 2000 as part of The Keyboard Meets Modern Technology. It involved pieces employing intricate contrapuntal devices, another piece based on music by John Cage, and on the same concert featured, as a special guest, pop keyboardist Keith Emerson of Emerson, Lake and Palmer. Since 1968, he has been associated with Cornell University where he was Composer/Pianist for Dance until 1987 when he joined the Music Department and established the Digital Music Program which has evolved into the Cornell Electroacoustic Music Center. Borden retired from Cornell in July of 2005. He has continued composing and performing. Most recently the first two volumes of his Preludes and Fugues for piano have been published by Promethean Publishers and is available from C F Peters.



Julius Eastman (1940-1990) grew up in Ithaca, New York, with his mother, Frances Eastman, and younger brother, Gerry. He began studying piano at age 14 and made rapid progress. He studied at Ithaca College before transferring to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. There he studied piano with Mieczysław Horszowski and composition with Constant Vaclair, and switched majors from piano to composition. He made his debut as a pianist in 1966 at The Town Hall in New York City immediately after graduating from Curtis. Eastman had a rich, deep, and extremely flexible singing voice, for which he became noted for his 1973 Nonesuch

recording of *Eight Songs for a Mad King* by the British composer Peter Maxwell Davies. Eastman's talents gained the attention of composer-conductor Lukas Foss, who conducted Davies' music in performance at the Brooklyn Philharmonic.

At the behest of Foss, Eastman joined the Creative Associates—a "prestigious program in avant-garde classical music" that "carried a stipend but no teaching obligations"—at SUNY Buffalo's Center for the Creative and Performing Arts. There he met Petr Kotik, a Czech-born composer, conductor, and flutist. Eastman and Kotik performed together extensively in the early to mid-1970s. Along with Kotik, Eastman was a founding member of the S.E.M. Ensemble.

From 1971 he performed and toured with the group, and composed numerous works for it. During this period, fifteen of Eastman's earliest works were performed by the Creative Associates, including *Stay On It* (1973), an early augury of postminimalism and one of the first art music compositions inspired by progressions from popular music, presaging the later innovations of Arthur Russell and Rhys Chatham. Although Eastman began to teach theory and composition courses over the course of his tenure, he left Buffalo in 1975 following a controversially ribald performance of John Cage's aleatoric *Songbooks* by the S.E.M. Ensemble (facilitated by Morton Feldman). It included nudity and homoerotic allusions interpolated by Eastman, during a visit from the elderly Cage. The latter was incensed and said during an ensuing lecture that Eastman's "[ego]... is closed in on homosexuality. And we know this because he has no other ideas." Additionally, Eastman's friend Kyle Gann has speculated that his inability to acclimate to the more bureaucratic elements of academic life (including paperwork) may have hastened his departure from the university.

Shortly thereafter, Eastman settled in New York City, where he initially straddled the divide between the conventionally bifurcated "uptown" and "downtown" music scenes. Eastman often wrote his music following what he called an "organic" principle. Each new section of a work contained all the information from previous sections, though sometimes "the information is taken out at a gradual and logical rate." The principle is most evident in his three works for four pianos, *Evil Nigger*, *Crazy Nigger*, and *Gay Guerrilla*, all from around 1979. The last of these appropriates Martin Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," as a gay manifesto. In 1976, Eastman participated in a performance of *Eight Songs for a Mad King* conducted by Pierre Boulez at Lincoln Center. He served as the first male vocalist in Meredith Monk's ensemble, as documented on her influential album *Dolmen Music* (1981). He fostered a strong kinship and collaboration with Arthur Russell, conducting nearly all of his orchestral recordings (compiled as *First Thought Best Thought* [Audika Records, 2006]) and participating (as organist and vocalist) in the recording of *24 → 24 Music* (1982; released under the imprimatur of *Dinosaur L*), a controversial disco-influenced composition that included the underground dance hits "Go Bang!" and "In the Cornbelt"; both featured Eastman's trademark bravado.

During this period, he also played in a jazz ensemble with his brother Gerry (erstwhile guitarist of the Count Basie Orchestra). He also coordinated the Brooklyn Philharmonic's outreach-oriented Community Concert Series (performed by the CETA Orchestra funded by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts) in conjunction with Foss and other composers of color. By 1980, he was regularly touring across the United States and internationally; a recording of a performance from that year at Northwestern University was released on the posthumous compilation *Unjust Malaise* (2005).

A 1981 piece for Eastman's voice and cello ensemble, *The Holy Presence of Jeanne d'Arc*, was performed at The Kitchen in New York City. In 1986, the choreographer Molissa Fenley set his dance, *Geologic Moments*, to Eastman's *Thruway*, which premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Despondent about what he saw as a dearth of worthy professional opportunities, Eastman grew increasingly dependent on drugs (including alcohol and possibly crack cocaine) after 1983. His life fell apart; many of his scores were impounded by the New York City Sheriff's Office following an eviction in the early 1980s, further impeding his professional development. While homeless, he briefly took refuge in Tompkins Square Park. A promised lectureship at Cornell University also failed to materialize during this period.

Despite a temporary attempt at a comeback, Eastman died alone at the age of 49 in Millard Fillmore Hospital in Buffalo, New York of cardiac arrest. No public notice was given to his death until an obituary by Kyle Gann appeared in the *Village Voice*; it was dated January 22, 1991, eight months after Eastman died. As Eastman's notational methods were loose and open to interpretation, revival of his music has been a difficult task, dependent on people who worked with him.



Sarah Hennies (b. 1979, Louisville, KY) is a composer based in upstate New York whose work is concerned with a variety of musical, sociopolitical, and psychological issues including queer & trans identity, love, intimacy, psychoacoustics, and percussion. She is primarily a composer of small chamber works, but is also active in improvisation, film, performance art, and dance. She presents her work internationally as both a composer and percussionist with notable performances at Le Guess Who (Utrecht), Festival Cable (Nantes), send + receive (Winnipeg), O' Art Space (Milan), The OBEY Convention (Halifax), Cafe Oto (London), ALICE (Copenhagen), and the Edition Festival (Stockholm). As a composer, she has received commissions across a wide array of performers and ensembles including Bearthoven, Bent Duo, Cristian Alvear, Claire Chase, R. Andrew Lee (Denver), LIMINAR, Thin Edge New Music Collective, Two-Way Street, and Yarn/Wire.

Her ground breaking audio-visual work *Contralto* (2017) explores transfeminine identity through the elements of "voice feminization" therapy, featuring a cast of transgender women accompanied by a dense and varied musical score for string quartet and three percussionists. The work has been in high demand since its premiere, with numerous performances taking place around North America, Europe, and Australia and was one of four finalists for the 2019 Queer|Art Prize.

She is the recipient of a 2019 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists Award, a 2016 fellowship in music/sound from the New York Foundation for the Arts, and has received additional support from New Music USA, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Community Arts Partnership of Tompkins County. Sarah is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at Bard College.



Robert Palmer (1915–2010) was born in Syracuse, NY, to a musical family, his mother a piano teacher and father an amateur singer employed by a local woodworking equipment manufacturer. A graduate of Eastman School of Music and student of Howard Hanson, Roy Harris, Aaron Copland, and Quincy Porter, Palmer produced more than ninety works throughout his career, earning a reputation in the mid-twentieth century as one of the country's most promising, daring and appealing modernists. A Fulbright Scholar, two-time Guggenheim Fellow and the first American composer to be published by Edition Peters,

Palmer created a distinct musical language that combined a deep emotional impulse with complex counterpoint and rhythmic structures. Palmer taught briefly at University of Kansas before receiving an appointment to Cornell University, where he founded the nation's first doctoral composition program and taught until retirement. Several important pianists have performed Palmer's music, including John Kirkpatrick, William Kapell, Claudio Arrau, Ramon Salvatore, Yvar Mikhashoff, and Jeanne Behrend, and his advocates have included composers as diverse as Elliot Carter, Steven Stucky, Kyle Gann, and Julius Eastman.



Ann Silsbee (1930-2003) grew up in Urbana, Illinois, and in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with one foot in the ocean at Martha's Vineyard when it was still an unknown island off the coast of Cape Cod. A pianist and composer, she received degrees from Radcliffe, Syracuse, and her DMA from Cornell. She wrote for a variety of media and was commissioned by several organizations, including the Gregg Smith Singers, Colgate University Chorus, the Syracuse Vocal Ensemble, Elmira Symphony, Ithaca Opera, and others. Her works have been recorded on CRI, Northeastern, and Spectrum by such distinguished artists as the Boston Musica Viva, Gregg Smith Singers, the Society for New Music, and David Burge. In May 1991 Ms. Silsbee traveled to China for performances and lectures. Her poems have been published in the *Atlanta Review*, *Seneca Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, and many other poetry journals. Her chapbook, *Naming the Disappeared*, was published by Vista Periodista. Married to the physicist Robert Silsbee, and mother of three grown sons with families of their own, she lived in Ithaca, New York. The woods, hills, and gorges of her home were an inexhaustible source of imagery for her poems. Ann Silsbee passed away on August 28, 2003.

Performer & Presenter Biographies



Pianist **Xak Bjerken** has appeared with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Spoleto Festival Orchestra, Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra, the Schoenberg Ensemble, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Disney Hall. He has performed at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Glinka Hall in St Petersburg, the Konzerthaus in Berlin, and for many years performed throughout the US as a member of the Los Angeles Piano Quartet. Bjerken has worked closely with composers György Kurtag, Sofia Gubaidulina, Steven Stucky, and George Benjamin, and over the past two years, has presented premieres of piano concertos by Stephen Hartke, Elizabeth Ogonek, and Jesse Jones. He is Professor of Music at Cornell University where he co-directs Mayfest, an international chamber music festival with his wife, pianist Miri Yampolsky. Bjerken studied with Aube Tzerko at the University of California at Los Angeles and received his Master's and Doctoral degrees from the Peabody Conservatory as a student of and teaching assistant to Leon Fleisher.



David Friend has been described by the *New York Times* as one “of the finest, busiest pianists active in New York’s contemporary-classical scene.” A fearless performer and relentless champion of new and experimental music, critics have called his performances “astonishingly compelling” (*Washington Post*), “magical” (*New York Concert Review*), and “sizzling.” (*NewMusicBox*). He performs regularly at major venues around the world (Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Royal Festival Hall (London), the National Centre for the Performing Arts (Beijing), at international festivals (Mostly Mozart, Gilmore, Prague Spring, CTM Berlin, Bang on a Can

Marathon), and at underground venues and experimental DIY performance spaces globally. He is a member of Ensemble Signal, Bent Duo, Grand Band Piano Sextet, Hotel Elephant, and TRANSIT New Music, and is also regularly a guest artist with ensembles including Alarm Will Sound, International Contemporary Ensemble, American Composers Orchestra, and the Bang on a Can All-Stars. He has recorded for the New Amsterdam, Harmonia Mundi, Albany, Dacapo, Cedille, Innova, Naxos, and a wave press labels, and his recording of music by Steve Reich with Third Coast Percussion won the 2017 GRAMMY award for best chamber music performance. David Friend completed his DMA in the Performance Practice program at Cornell University in 2019.



Sara Haefeli is an associate professor at Ithaca College where she teaches music history, American experimentalism, and philosophy of creativity courses. She is author of the monograph, *John Cage: A Research and Information Guide* (Routledge, 2018), and her work on Cage has been published in the journal *American Music*. Haefeli is co-author of *Writing in Music: A Brief Guide* (Oxford, 2020) with Lynne Rogers and Karen Bottge. Haefeli is Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, where her scholarship on teaching writing to music history students has appeared. Haefeli is also an accomplished cellist, specializing in contemporary music performance. Before coming to Ithaca, Haefeli taught at the University of Northern Colorado where she particularly enjoyed performing as a member of the Colorado-based psychedelic bluegrass trio, *The Prairie Pranksters*.



Ellie M. Hisama is Professor of Music (Music Theory and Historical Musicology) at Columbia University. She is the author of *Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon* (2001) and co-editor of *Critical Minded: New Approaches to Hip-Hop Studies* (2005). At Columbia, she founded the multi-year project *Working in Sound: For the Daughters of Harlem*, a workshop for young women of color to theorize, compose, and record their work at Columbia’s historic Computer Music Center. Hisama was the Kenneth H. Peacock Lecturer at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music, the invited music theorist in the Robert Samels Visiting Scholar Program at the Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music, and the Scholar in Residence for the Judy Tsou ’75 Music Scholars Series at Skidmore College. Her essay “‘Diving into the Earth’: The Musical Worlds of Julius Eastman” appears in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship* (2015).



Isaac Jean-François is a student at Columbia University studying Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. His theoretical work is guided by Black and Sound Studies, Queer Theory, and Phenomenology. As a board member of the Stonewall Community Foundation, Jean-François remains committed to the intersection between academia and advocacy. Engaging underrepresented narratives in dominant academic disciplines, especially as they concern the arts, Jean-François charts nonnormative genealogies of contemporary black and brown aesthetic practice. Jean-François’s focused inquiry on the life and oeuvre of Julius Eastman (1940–1990) is interested in exceptional black queer performance. His work is guided by the central query: What are the effects of Eastman’s aesthetic production, as evident in his 1980 Northwestern Concert Series, that emerge at the impasse between virtuosic sound and disruptive slur?

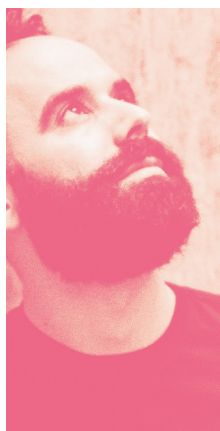


Pianist **Joseph Kubera’s** affiliation with Julius Eastman goes back to the early 1970s in Buffalo, NY, and continued after 1980 in New York City, where he performed with Eastman in his multiple-piano works and in other concert presentations. He has directed performances of Eastman’s works around the U.S. and in England and the Czech Republic. Kubera “may well be this era’s David Tudor,” wrote Robert Carl in Fanfare. A leading interpreter of contemporary music for the past three decades, recent activities include the premiere of Michael Byron’s *The Ultraviolet of Many Parallel Paths* for two pianos (with Marilyn Nonken) and new CDs of music by Lejaren Hiller and John Becker for New World Records. He has been a soloist at major European festivals and has worked closely with such luminaries as Morton Feldman, La Monte Young, Robert Ashley, Alvin Lucier, and Roscoe Mitchell. A longtime Cage advocate, he has made definitive recordings of Music of Changes and the Concert for Piano, and toured widely with the Cunningham Dance Company at Cage’s invitation. He is a core member of the S.E.M. Ensemble. Kubera has been awarded grants through the N.E.A. and the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. He has recorded for Wergo, New Albion, New World and many other labels.



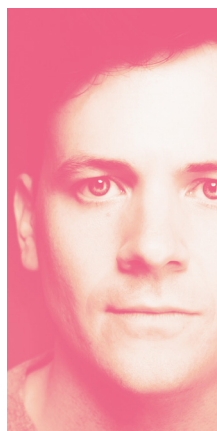
Matthew Mendez is a PhD student in music history at Yale University. A specialist in sonic and musical techniques after 1945, Matt's dissertation project, "A Media Genealogy of the Cloned Voice, from 'Daisy Bell' to Deepfakes", offers a critical history of the digital "sound-alike" voice. Toggling between problems of forensic truth in our present "post-truth" media ecosystem, and the ostensibly "truth-free" status of music in Western concert culture, the project traces the coalescence and eventual breakdown of new musical, legalistic, and identitarian ontologies as a reaction to the algorithmization of vocal uniqueness over the long twentieth

century. Related to this work is a critique, currently in its preliminary stages, of what might be referred to as the "constitutive whiteness" of contemporary media-theoretic methods. Among Matt's other research interests are the life and work of Julius Eastman; one result of this work was his chapter, "'That Piece Does Not Exist Without Julius': Still Staying on *Stay On It*", published in the 2015 volume *Gay Guerrilla: Julius Eastman and His Music*. A more recent project, "Hugues Dufourt's 'Field' Metaphors, vis-à-vis Varèse and Bachelard", is forthcoming as a chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Spectral and Post-Spectral Music*.



Pianist **Adam Tendler**, A 2019 recipient of the Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists and "remarkable and insightful musician" (*LA Times*) "joyfully rocking out at his keyboard" (*New York Times*), is a recognized interpreter of living and modern composers. A pioneer of DIY culture in classical music, between 2005 and 2006 Tendler performed in all fifty United States as part of a grassroots recital tour he called America 88x50, which became the subject of his memoir, *88x50*, a Kirkus Indie Book of the Month and Lambda Literary Award nominee. A presence in all new music and classical genres as a concert soloist, recording artist, speaker and educator, Tendler

has also performed the complete major piano works of Aaron Copland and collaborates with the John Cage Trust and Edition Peters in presenting Cage's work internationally. In 2019 he released the album *Robert Palmer: Piano Music* on New World Records, and published his second book, *tidepools*.



Richard Valitutto is a Grammy®-nominated piano soloist, chamber musician, vocal accompanist, and composing/improvising creative with an active performance schedule that spans both coasts of the U.S., across the country, and abroad. Described as "a keyboard superstar" (*The New Yorker*) and as a "vivid soloist," "vigorously virtuosic," "quietly dazzling," and "all around go-to new music specialist" (*LA Times*), his soloistic charisma and flexible collaborative artistry have distinguished him for his tenacity in bringing dynamic life to scores in the spirit of integrated collaboration and informed understanding. With a focus on

contemporary keyboard performance, Richard is particularly committed to exploring the extended palette of piano techniques and the prepared piano. He has collaborated and performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Martha Graham Dance Company, PBS Great Performances, Monday Evening Concerts, LA Dance Project, and Opera Omaha, among many others. He is a founding member of both the Grammy®-nominated Wild Up Modern Music Collective, as well as the new music quartet, gnarwhallaby, hailed as "startlingly versatile" (*NY Times*) in their Carnegie Hall debut. Richard is currently in residence at Cornell University's Keyboard Studies DMA program, and he holds degrees in piano performance from the California Institute of the Arts (MFA) and the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music (BM, *summa cum laude*).



Pianist **Andrew Zhou** has been noted for his "great sensitivity" and luminous technique" (*AnaClase*), as well as performances of "extraordinary energy" (*ResMusica*). Finalist and laureate of four prizes at the Concours International de Piano d'Orléans (France), Mr. Zhou has toured throughout France and has appeared in major venues such as the KKL (Lucerne Festival), Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), and the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord (Paris). He has worked closely with leading composers of our time, including Unsuk Chin (Austrian premiere of her *Double Concerto*), Tristan Murail, Matthias Pintscher, and Walter

Zimmermann. He has been pianist of the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble and Ensemble Ulysses. Mr. Zhou received degrees from Stanford University with distinction, New England Conservatory, where he was awarded a Beneficent Society Scholarship, and Cornell University, where he is currently visiting lecturer in piano. Forthcoming releases include contributions on the Aeon (with Ensemble InterContemporain), CP2 (a disc of two-piano music), Open Space, and New Focus labels. Visit andrew-zhou.com for more information.

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