

**RADICAL ADORNMENT:  
THE MUSIC OF  
JULIUS  
EASTMAN**

**TISCH  
MUSIC**  
2022/23 SEASON



# DEAR FRIENDS,

It is a joy to welcome you to The 92nd Street Y, New York, to celebrate the life and work of Julius Eastman.

From the moment I first heard Eastman's music — a recording of a 1974 performance of *Feminine* with the composer at the piano — the exuberance, the joyfulness, the freedom, the big-heartedness of the music captivated me. I was hooked.

I was also confused. How could such a compelling voice have been almost completely erased from musical history? Was it perhaps because an outspoken Black, gay man did not fit with society's idea of what a composer should be?

Opportunities to hear Eastman's work are still not frequent enough, and I hope that you enjoy this survey of his astonishing output, from the sparkling, sprawling *Feminine* to the enigmatic *Buddha* to the dance party of *Stay On It*. This is incredible music — even moreso when you consider that its very creation was a radical act: every note of Eastman's music, every word of his writing, every recorded speech we have, conveys a need for justice, for equality, for compassion. Eastman lived his entire life working to advance those causes. We — all of us — must continue that work today.

Sincerely,

Nicholas F. Russotto  
Senior Director of Music Programming

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**THE 92ND STREET Y, NEW YORK**

Theresa L. Kaufmann Concert Hall

FRIDAY, **APRIL 21, 2023**, 7:30 PM

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# RADICAL ADORNMENT — THE MUSIC OF JULIUS EASTMAN: I

**WILD UP**

**CHRISTOPHER ROUNTREE,**

conductor/artistic director

**RICHARD VALITUTTO,** piano

***Femenine***

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*Steinway & Sons is the official piano of The 92nd Street Y, New York.*

*Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices before the concert.*

*Photographs and audio/video recording are prohibited.*

**THE 92ND STREET Y, NEW YORK**

Theresa L. Kaufmann Concert Hall

SATURDAY, **APRIL 22, 2023**, 2 PM

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# RADICAL ADORNMENT — THE MUSIC OF JULIUS EASTMAN: II

**WILD UP**

**CHRISTOPHER ROUNTREE,**

conductor/artistic director

with special guests

**DEVONTÉ HYNES,** piano

**ADAM TENDLER,** piano

*NOTE: This program listing includes offensive language, printed in accordance with the wishes of the composer.*

## ***Piano 2***

- I.
- II.
- III.

## ***Stay On It***

## ***Evil Nigger***

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**THE 92ND STREET Y, NEW YORK**

Theresa L. Kaufmann Concert Hall

SATURDAY, **APRIL 22, 2023**, 7 PM

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# RADICAL ADORNMENT — THE MUSIC OF JULIUS EASTMAN: III

**WILD UP**

**CHRISTOPHER ROUNTREE,**

conductor/artistic director

## ***Buddha***

A free-flowing five-hour performance of Eastman's egg-shaped, open-score epic – hear some music, break for dinner, return for more music, explore the photo exhibit, talk with the musicians at the bar – create your own experience.

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# Meet the Artists

**ANDREW THOLL,**  
violin / electronics

**ADRIANNE POPE,** violin

**MONA TIAN,** violin / viola

**LINNEA POWELL,** viola

**DARIAN DONOVAN THOMAS,**  
violin / electronics

**DEREK STEIN,** cello

**MARLON MARTINEZ,** bass

**TARIQ AL SABIR,**  
keyboards / voice

**RICHARD VALITUTTO,** piano

**JODIE LANDAU,**  
percussion / voice

**SIDNEY HOPSON,** percussion

**ISABEL LEPANTO GLEICHER,**  
flutes

**M.A. TIESENGA,** saxophones

**ERIN ROGERS,** saxophones

**PATRICK SHIROISHI,**  
saxophones

**SHELLEY WASHINGTON,**  
saxophones

**ODEYA NINI,** voice

**CATHERINE BROOKMAN,**  
voice

**CHRISTOPHER ROUNTREE,**  
conductor / voice /  
artistic director

## WILD UP

Called “a raucous, grungy, irresistibly exuberant ... fun-loving, exceptionally virtuosic family” by Zachary Woolfe of *The New York Times*, Wild Up has been lauded as one of classical music’s most exciting groups by virtually every significant institution and critic within earshot. Artistic Director Christopher Rountree started the group in 2010 with a vision of a group of young musicians that rejected outdated traditions and threw classical repertoire into the context of pop culture, new music, and performance art.

Over the past decade, the now Grammy-nominated group has: accompanied Björk at Goldenvoice’s FYF Fest; brought a Julius Eastman portrait to the National Gallery; premiered David Lang and Mark Dion’s *anatomy theater* at LA Opera; gave the west coast premiere of Ragnar Kjartansson’s 12-hour Mozartian epic *Bliss*; played the scores to *Under the Skin* by Mica Levi and *Punch Drunk Love* by Jon Brion live with the films at LA’s Regent Theater and Ace Hotel; premiered a new opera by Julia Holter at Brooklyn’s National Sawdust; premiered a new work of avant-pop icon Scott Walker and celestial loop-maker Juliana Barwick at Walt Disney Concert Hall; played a noise concert-fanfare for the groundbreaking of Frank Gehry’s new building on Grand Avenue and First Street in downtown LA; premiered hundreds of other works; held performance and

educational residencies at the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Colburn School, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, National Sawdust, the Hammer Museum, the Getty, and dozens of educational institutions across the US; and started an annual winter festival in LA celebrating ecstatic music making and mindfulness practice called Darkness Sounding.

The first record in their Eastman anthology *Julius Eastman Vol. 1: Femenine* has been lauded as “A masterpiece” (*The New York Times*),

“instantly recognizable” (*Vogue*) and “singularly jubilant ... a bit in your face, sometimes capricious, and always surprising” (NPR). NPR named the record among the top 10 records of 2021 in all genres.

# CHRISTOPHER ROUNTREE

## CONDUCTOR/ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

We hear Stravinsky pouring out of an abandoned warehouse; see dozens of watermelons fly off of Disney Hall; parse a chorus singing Haydn’s *Creation* backwards; see Lady Macbeth in a dozen crooning silhouettes washing blood out of rags over bright porcelain sinks in a museum bathroom; hear a violinist recite a poem about melting ice cream and lost love; watch three minutes of *Le Nozze* for 12 hours on repeat; follow the archeology of a lost ballet coming to life; and hear the

sound of rose-petal jam making as music. Conductor, composer, curator, and performer, Christopher Rountree is standing at the intersection of classical music, new music, performance art, and pop.

Regarded as one of the most iconoclastic conductors in the field, Rountree’s inimitable style has led to collaborations with Björk, John Adams, Yoko Ono, David Lang, Scott Walker, La Monte Young, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Mica Levi, Alison Knowles, Patricia Kopatchinskja, John Luther Adams,



Sigourney Weaver, Ted Hearne, Tyshawn Sorey, Ragnar Kjartansson, Missy Mazzoli, L'Rain, Caroline Shaw, Saul Williams, Ellen Reid, R.B. Schlather, James Darrah, Ryoji Ikeda, Du Yun, Yuval Sharon, and many of the planet's greatest orchestras and ensembles including the San Francisco Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Houston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Opera national de Paris, the Washington National Opera, Los Angeles Opera, and the Martha Graham Dance Company.

Rountree is the founder and artistic director of Wild Up, curator of Darkness Sounding, and Music Director of Long Beach Opera. He has been the artistic director of SILENCE an interdisciplinary ambient series in an oak grove in LA, and curator of the LA Phil's Fluxus Festival.

# DEVONTÉ HYNES

## PIANO

Raised in England, Devonté Hynes started in the punk band Test Icicles before releasing two orchestral acoustic pop records as Lightspeed Champion. Since 2011, Hynes has released four solo albums under the name Blood Orange – *Coastal Grooves*, *Cupid Deluxe*, *Freetown Sound*, and *Negro Swan*, as well as 2019's *Angel's Pulse* mixtape, all of which have been critically acclaimed. His songs and albums have explored the complexities and ambiguities of 21st century identity, delving into memory, trauma, depression and anxiety, as well as the triumphs of vulnerable communities, including people of color and queer and trans communities, and where they intersect.

In addition to his solo work, Hynes has collaborated with pop music superstars including Mariah Carey, A\$AP Rocky, Solange, P. Diddy, and many others. He is also an accomplished film and television composer, with credits including the

scores for Melina Matsoukas' *Queen and Slim*, Luca Guadagnino's *We Are Who We Are*, and Rebecca Hall's *Passing*.

In 2018, Hynes was one of four pianists invited to play alongside Phillip Glass at the Kennedy Center, and in 2020, he was nominated for a Grammy in the category of Best Chamber Music or Small Ensemble Performance for his work with Third Coast Percussion on their album *Fields*. His debut concerto for piano and strings, *Happenings*, premiered at New York's Little Island Festival in 2021.

# ADAM TENDLER

## PIANO

A recipient of the Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists and the 2022 Yvar Mikhashoff Prize, “currently the hottest pianist on the American contemporary classical scene” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*), a “remarkable and insightful musician” (*The Los Angeles Times*), and “relentlessly adventurous pianist” (*Washington Post*) “joyfully rocking out at his keyboard” (*The New York Times*), Adam Tandler is an internationally recognized interpreter of living, modern and classical composers. A pioneer of DIY culture in concert music, he has commissioned and premiered major works by Christian Wolff and Devonté Hynes alike.

In his early twenties Tandler performed in all 50 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. He has gone on to become one of classical and contemporary music’s most recognized artists, with recent

engagements including his 92NY performance of *Inheritances*, with works by 16 of today’s most influential composers – a concert *The New York Times* called “emotionally involving and musically rewarding.” Recent appearances also include performances as soloist with the LA Philharmonic and on the mainstages of Carnegie Hall and BAM. He has been presented by the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and a host of other leading series and platforms including The Broad, Guggenheim, Liquid Music, The Kitchen, le Poisson Rouge, National Sawdust, Knockdown Center, Issue Project Room, Maverick Concerts, Roulette, Death of Classical, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Philadelphia Museum of Art, and NYC Pride.

# ABOUT JULIUS EASTMAN

Julius Eastman (1940-1990) was a composer, conductor, singer, pianist, and choreographer. A singular figure in New York City's downtown scene of the 1970s and '80s, he also performed at Lincoln Center with Pierre Boulez and the New York Philharmonic, and recorded music by Arthur Russell, Morton Feldman, Peter Maxwell Davies, and Meredith Monk. "What I am trying to achieve is to be what I am to the fullest," he said in 1976. "Black to the fullest, a musician to the fullest, a homosexual to the fullest."

Despite his prominence in the artistic and musical community in New York, Eastman died in obscurity in a Buffalo, NY hospital. His death went unreported for eight months, until an obituary by Kyle Gann appeared in *The Village Voice*. Eastman left behind few scores and recordings, and his music lay dormant for decades until a three-CD set of his compositions titled *Unjust Malaise* was issued in 2005 by New World Records. In the years since, there has been a steady

increase in attention paid to his music and life, punctuated by newly found recordings and manuscripts, worldwide performances and new arrangements of his surviving works, and newfound interest from choreographers, scholars, educators, and journalists. "The brazen and brilliant music of Julius Eastman ... commands attention: wild, grand, delirious, demonic, an uncontainable personality surging into sound," writes Alex Ross for *The New Yorker*.

Join us for these additional events:

# WITNESSING JULIUS EASTMAN

PHOTOGRAPHS AND EPHEMERA FROM **CHRISTINE RUSINIAK**

92NY Weill Art Gallery | Pre- and post-concerts | Free

*Co-presented with the 92NY Gilda and Henry Block School of the Arts*

*The Art Center faculty, adult and special exhibitions are supported by Catherine Hannah Behrend.*

# CONSIDERING JULIUS EASTMAN

TALK WITH **ISAAC JEAN-FRANCOIS, MALIK GAINES, DARIAN  
DONOVAN THOMAS, AND RICHARD VALITUTTO; ETHAN  
PHILBRICK, MODERATOR**

92NY Weill Art Gallery | 3:30 PM | Free

# ON JULIUS EASTMAN'S MUSIC

sourced and written by Ethan Philbrick

**“The composer must become the total musician, not only a composer. To be only a composer is not enough.”**

– Julius Eastman, from  
*“The Composer as Weakling”*

**“What I am trying to achieve is to be what I am to the fullest— Black to the fullest, a musician to the fullest, a homosexual to the fullest. It is important that I learn how to be, by that I mean accept everything about me.”**

– Julius Eastman, quoted in a 1976 profile  
for the Buffalo Evening News

**“Eastman existed in a space where he fought to be unapologetically Black, gay and creative on his own terms, and to this day that radical act continues to ruffle feathers.”**

– Seth Parker Woods, from  
*“Foreword: Unabashed Adornment”* included in the liner notes to *Wild Up’s Julius Eastman Anthology, Volume One: Femenine*

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**“As a gay African American musician and composer working in the largely white new music scene of the 1970s and 1980s, Eastman did not readily fit into the worlds to which his musical talents brought him.”**

– Ellie Hisama, from *“Diving into the earth”: the musical worlds of Julius Eastman”*

**Question: “What is your ultimate aim in studying music?”**

**Answer: “To obtain wisdom.”**

– from Julius Eastman’s  
application to The Curtis  
Institute of Music

**“I shall emancipate myself from the bind of the past and the present; I shall emancipate myself from myself.”**

– Julius Eastman, from his program notes  
for the 1981 premiere of *The Holy Presence*  
of Joan d’Arc at The Kitchen

"One thing was apparent to all who knew Julius, whether casually or intimately, whether professionally or (like myself) personally — his attitude toward authority was utterly uncompromising."

– R. Nemo Hill, from *"The Julius Eastman Parables"*

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**"Racism within the classical world prevented him from doing the things he was doing. The system was rigged against him. [...] Julius is just another in the line of black geniuses who get squashed in this particular hemisphere."**

– Gerry Eastman, *Julius Eastman's*  
younger brother, jazz guitarist and  
founder of Williamsburg Music Center

"I always thought I was great, but why does making it big take so long?"

– Julius Eastman, from  
a 1971 interview published  
in *The Reporter*  
(a University of Buffalo  
campus newspaper)

**"We must consider the danger of Eastman remaining an anomaly deployed in the history of New Music and minimalism for the sake of neoliberal inclusion without reckoning with either Eastman's Black queer radicalism or the violence that Black and queer people in the U.S. still face."**

– Alex Valin, from *"The Haunting of Julius Dunbar Eastman"*

**"People fear punishment. There is always somebody who is trying to crush you. I refuse to think about that. I refuse to be afraid of my own comrades, of being castigated, thrown out or thought of badly."**

– Julius Eastman, quoted in a 1976 profile for  
the Buffalo Evening News

"Eastman breathes  
alternative  
articulations of life  
through duress."

– Isaac Jean-François,  
from *"Julius Eastman: The  
Sonority of Blackness  
Otherwise"*

**"Did Julius want us to have a hold on his life,  
or did he want the residue of his life and work to  
remain as cunning as he was?"**

– Tiona Nekkia McClodden, from the curatorial  
statement for *That Which is Fundamental:  
A Recollection*

**H**ow do we retroactively celebrate Julius Eastman's visionary music, more than 30 years after his passing, within the large cultural institutions that didn't support him during his lifetime? How do we amplify the "Black queer radicalism" of Eastman's compositions while simultaneously reckoning with the "violence that Black and queer people in the US still face"? How do we keep listening for his "alternative articulations of life through duress" while "allowing the residue of his life and work to remain as cunning as he was?"

There are many people currently investigating these questions. In what follows, I offer three brief meditations on three keywords as my own addition to this ongoing collective reckoning with Eastman's work and legacy. Eastman's pieces extend well beyond the notes written on the page and the sounds played on the stage. We need close listening *and* close thinking in order to attune ourselves to the sounds and social disruptions that Eastman orchestrated. With this in mind, I turn to three terms: *preformance*, *clock-anti-clock*, and *fundament*.

*Preformance*: Eastman's titles aren't just names of pieces of music, but anticipatory performances in themselves. *Feminine* (1974) is a neologism that implies both a generative error and a queer invention: "men" inside of "feminine," it indexes the mutual constitution of gendered categories, pre-emptively creating a sense of non-binary gender within a piece of music. *Evil Ni\*\*\*r* (1979), on the other hand, calls up — articulating and disarticulating — the brutality of white supremacy and anti-Blackness before a note of the piece has been played. The title pre-exposes the political dynamics already circulating

within and around any performance of the piece. This pre-exposure strikes me as resonating with what the poet and philosopher Fred Moten has been calling *Black preformance* in his recent pedagogy and writing. Part of what Moten means by preformance is a certain anticipatory force in the aesthetic and social practice of what Cedric Robinson names "the Black radical tradition." In moving from performance to *preformance*, Moten opens a space between anti- and ante-, articulating Blackness as an ante-resistance that prefigures the anti- of anti-Blackness, moving our attention toward that which pre-forms and de-forms, to time out of joint, to the early and the late, to the all-around and already. Eastman's titles are acts of performance — anticipatory refusals of the scene of their containment by whiteness and heteronormativity, they get out ahead of the pieces, compositions in themselves.

*Clock-anti-clock*: Many of Eastman's works involve stopwatches and the need for mechanized timekeeping. Clocks are instruments of abstract measurement, order, and regularity, whereas Eastman's music creates periods of time that are beyond measure, that bend and stretch in ecstatic duration, that sway and swerve in unruly assembly. There is a tension between these two regimes of time in much of Eastman's music — seconds and minutes tick by while the felt experience of time opens and contracts like a fan, five minutes become long and 40 minutes become short. Eastman gathers players around a clock so they can be in sync in all of their political out of sync-ness, so they can keep time together in a way that opens time up to a necessary disorder. Eastman's 1984 score *Buddha* opens



time up even further by departing from the tension of clock-anti-clock and offering an open score of meterless sustained notes written inside what appears to be a large, vibrating egg. As one of Eastman's scores without time-markings or duration requirements, the dynamic of clock-anti-clock gives way to a space of sonic togetherness measured only by music's making.

*Fundament:* When Eastman premiered *Evil Ni\*\*\*r* at Northwestern University in 1980, a Black student activist organization protested the performance, arguing that the use of the n-word in Eastman's title within the overwhelmingly white context of the Northwestern music department only contributed to the systemic white supremacy of the university. Eastman met with the students before the performance and decided with them that his titles wouldn't be printed in the program and that he would instead give a verbal introduction to announce and contextualize them. In this verbal introduction, Eastman explained that his use of the n-word was neither about reclaiming the sign nor repeating the slur, but instead it was an effort to name "that which is fundamental" to the history

of the United States, namely the institution of slavery and its role in the constitution of racial capitalism as an economic system. He goes on to call this desire to get at the "fundamentality" of things an investment in "basicness," not "basic" as it is colloquially used now to mean normative or mainstream, but basic as in the base, as an investigation of the below — below the visible, below the figure, below the ground — as an excavation of the soil, the fundament. The word radical comes from the Latin *radix, radic-*, meaning root. Eastman's compositions are radical in their "at the root"-ness, in their base-ness, but this engagement with roots, with fundament, also radiates out towards unknown realms. Eastman's radicality is also radial, radiant.

– *Ethan Philbrick*  
*April, 2023*

**Ethan Philbrick is an interdisciplinary artist, cellist, and writer. His book, *Group Works: Art, Politics, and Collectivity Ambivalence* was recently published by Fordham University Press.**



*Scan code to learn more about Julius Eastman.*

"Now music is only one  
of my attributes.  
I could be a Dancer,  
Choreographer, Painter  
or any other kind of artist  
if I so wished; but right  
thought, speech and  
action are now my main  
concerns. No other thing  
is as important or as  
useful. Right thought, Right  
Speech, Right action,  
Right music."

– *Julius Eastman, from his biography  
for the 1981 premiere of The Holy Presence  
of Joan d'Arc at The Kitchen*



The 92nd Street Y, New York