



JULIUS  
EASTMAN  
VOL. 3

WILD UP  
DEVONTÉ HYNES  
ADAM TENDLER

IF YOU'RE SO  
SMART,  
WHY AREN'T  
YOU RICH?





# WILD UP

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MOLLY PEASE, VOICE  
CHLOE VOUGHT, VOICE  
ELIZA BAGG, VOICE  
CATHERINE BROOKMAN, VOICE  
ODEYA NINI, VOICE

SHARON CHOHI KIM, VOICE  
FAHAD SAIDAT, VOICE  
SAUNDER CHOI, VOICE  
JAMES HAYDEN, VOICE  
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for what he brought to this world.



# CONVERSATION

Malik Gaines, artist,  
composer, and writer, and Ethan  
Philbrick, interdisciplinary  
artist, cellist, and writer  
in conversation for  
Julius Eastman Vol 3.

Ethan Philbrick: In 1979, Julius Eastman published a short essay in Ear Magazine entitled “The Composer as Weakling.” The essay is a diatribe against the musical division of labor between composers and performers, calling for composers to play and perform, for a composer to be a “vital part of the musical life of his/her community” rather than just an “isolated and torpid [...] unattended queen bee.” As I read the essay now, amidst Eastman’s absence after his passing in 1990 and projects such as Wild Up’s Julius Eastman Anthology that help to retroactively install him in the canon of 20th century composers, his essay also

strikes me as a call for the reverse—for instrumentalists and performers interested in reactivating his scores and his legacy to also become composers themselves, to think and make beyond interpreting notated tones on a page, to enter the fray of all the musical and social disruptions Eastman’s compositions ignite.

Each of the three pieces included in this album—Evil N\*\*\*\*\*, The Moon’s Silent Modulation, and If You’re So Smart, Why Aren’t You Rich?—are notated using a combination of graphic representations, instructions, timing cues, and musical notations that ask players to be

different kinds of instrumentalists and musicians—to generate and not just interpret, to perform sounds but also to navigate the broader political context of their performance.

Malik Gaines: Eastman’s own handwritten note on a score of The Moon’s Silent Modulation pursues part of the problem: “We have delivered ourselves from the tonal.” The score offers musicians plenty of opportunities to do so. Then, deepening the interrogation, the handwriting continues: “BUT who will deliver us from the notes?” This is written over a particularly note-y section. It’s a playful call and response but also a

serious discussion about freedom, which can be an illusory horizon. The question implicitly asks its reader, the musician, to do more.

EP: Yes, when artists perform and revive Eastman's compositions in the present, they have to do more than they might usually do. They don't just revive the notes. As another example, a piece like Evil N\*\*\*\*\* isn't just about the sounds that happen inside of it, it is also about the rupturing social significance of its title. In reviving this piece, artists also revive Eastman as a politically provocative conceptual artist invested in institutional critique.

MG: I get a lot of joy and cleverness from his work. But Eastman left behind many problems for us. His approach not only desegregates but attempts to undo the hierarchies of music production. It's a body of work that carries questions of form from inside of music to the outside; from the material and disciplinary to the social and political. Eastman's scores very often ask instrumentalists to collaborate by composing in

the moment. The score for Evil N\*\*\*\*\* has notes on staves, but there is so much that its players have to find out together, as these notes are only basic instructions that instrumentalists can use to find their way through time. While Wild Up has arranged this piece for two pianos and orchestra—with the impressive artists Devonté Hynes and Adam Tandler on piano—it is also among the works Eastman originally performed with multiple instruments of the same kind. I've seen it played with four pianos, for example. This can be a beautiful response to Eastman's critique of "isolation." The singular instrument, isolated in its orchestral place and on the orchestral score, becomes doubled, tripled, quadrupled, and more. The singular becomes infinite. There is an interesting promiscuous homosexuality in this image and sound, in sameness as a multi-partner collaborative with only a few guidelines.

Recordings like this one also necessarily return us to Eastman's own isolation in a highly white world of new music. In his 1980 spoken introduction to the premiere of Evil N\*\*\*\*\*

at Northwestern University (included in the 2005 compilation of Eastman's recorded work entitled Unjust Malaise and reprinted here), we hear Eastman insist on the difficulty of these titles. He won't soften or minimize at all. As we think about moves to integrate Eastman's amazing music into contemporary repertoires, we have to take seriously his previous banishment, and his own refusal to accommodate. This present process of posthumous reconciliation should perhaps feel as difficult as his music.

EP: Yes, absolutely. Eastman's use of the n-word in his title exposes the political dynamics already circulating within any performance of the piece. If it is being played or uttered from or around a position of whiteness, the title lacerates and repeats a symbolic violence. In the verbal introduction to the 1980 performance that you mentioned, 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. His title for this piece means that it resists any kind of frictionless attempt at retroactive institutional absorption in the present. It can't circulate without inducing political reckonings at every turn.

Even his scores that don't have such politically charged titles, such The Moon's Silent Modulation and If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Rich?, have a clear attunement to the potentially antagonistic and yet indeterminate social dynamics at play in any scene of performance. There is a moment in the score for The Moon's Silent Modulation when Eastman instructs his performers to be "silen[t] until noise appears in audience." His pieces disrupt and are also open to disruption.

MG: If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Rich? is a joke, of course, because smart people already know why they aren't rich. Folks can be too smart for their own good. This lovely boisterous piece dwells in the

hazard of performance, pushing instruments to their limits. A devoted squad of brass and woodwind players huff and puff in the foreground, using all of their breath to climb Eastman's scales. Their effort reminds us, again, that the determined act of trying to make it is an exhausting form of artistry.

## NOTE ON TITLES

Wild Up's Anthology engages with the complex history of Julius Eastman's legacy and ideas, including the titles of his work. Each person involved in making this Anthology is negotiating their position and relationship to the n-word; thus, the word appears in several permutations throughout. We chose to use Eastman's given titles in the track listing to honor the composer's intentions. With this seven-volume project, Wild Up aims to be part of the ongoing social, political, and artistic dialogue and the circulation of Eastman's work.

We are grateful for the deep and nuanced exploration of scholars, historians, artists, and critics internationally. Our collection of resources on titling and more, including Eastman's own words, is available at: <https://www.wildup.org/project/julius-eastman-anthology>.



Handwritten musical notation for a performance piece, featuring multiple staves and descriptive annotations.

**Top Staff:**

- WOMEN:** High mumbling (represented by wavy lines).
- MEN:** (low mumbling) (represented by wavy lines).
- Annotations:** "cut off" (above wavy lines), "long" (above a long note), "dim" (above a wavy line).

**Second Staff:**

- MEN:** (low gulped sounds) (represented by 'x' marks).

**Third Staff:**

- CHORUS:** ad lib. chords (represented by 'x' marks).
- Annotations:** "RANDOM" (above notes), "NOTES" (above notes), "short" (circled around notes).

**Bottom Staff:**

- Solo:** (represented by a single 'x' mark).

1. IF YOU'RE SO  
SMART, WHY  
AREN'T YOU  
RICH?

ARRANGED BY JODIE LANDAU AND CHRISTOPHER  
ROUNTREE. SOLOS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE: JONAH  
LEVY, TRUMPET; ANNA SCHUBERT, VOICE; ODEYA  
NINI, VOICE; DREW NINMER, TRUMPET; MATT COOK,  
PERCUSSION; BREANA GILCHER, OBOE; ERIN  
MCKIBBEN, FLUTE; CATHERINE BROOKMAN, VOICE;  
ELIZA BAGG, VOICE; WILLIAM ROPER, ANIMAL  
BONES; PATRICK SHIROISHI, TENOR SAXOPHONE.

2. THE MOON'S  
SILENT  
MODULATION

SOLOS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE: JAMES HAYDEN,  
SAUNDER CHOI, CHOHI KIM, ELIZA BAGG,  
SCOTT GRAF, ANNA SCHUBERT, JODIE LANDAU,  
CATHERINE BROOKMAN – VOICES.

3. EVIL NIGGER

ARRANGED BY DEVONTÉ HYNES, ADAM TENDLER,  
LEWIS PESACOV AND CHRISTOPHER ROUNTREE.

DEVONTÉ HYNES, PIANO / LEADER  
ADAM TENDLER, PIANO / LEADER