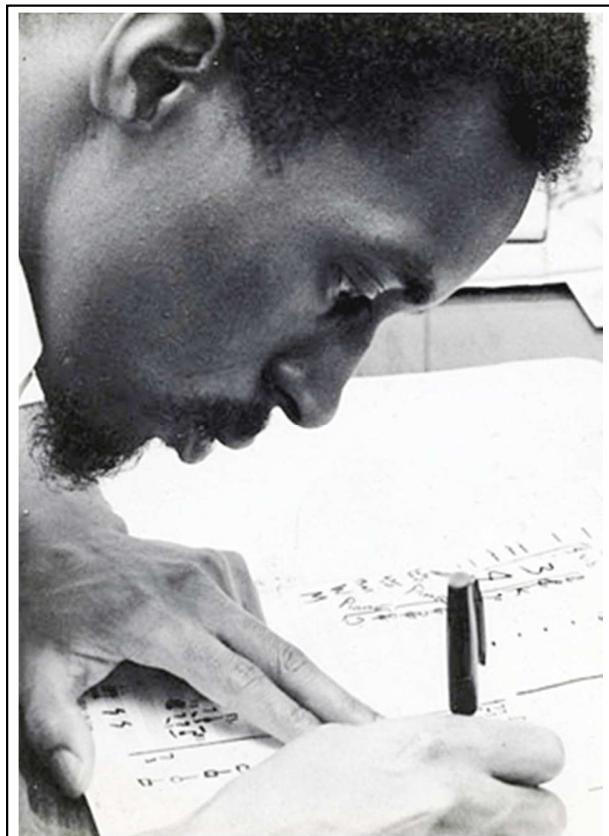


EVIL NIGGER

By Julius Eastman

Edited by Frank Nawrot



First Edition

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Resurrecting a Minimalist Masterpiece: Julius Eastman's "Evil Nigger"

Julius Eastman's work *Evil Nigger* is an often overlooked piece composed in 1979. This work represents Eastman's unique style of minimalism which he called "organic music." This paper is the companion to the first critical edition of *Evil Nigger* and will do two things: 1) explain the nature of the piece and prescribe how to execute it and 2) provide an analysis of the piece that will help those who wish to perform it gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of it.

Julius Eastman (1940-1990) was a minimalist composer, pianist, and singer whose work has remained largely unknown until recent years. Few details about Eastman's life were recorded for posterity. The leading Eastman researcher, Mary Jane Leach wrote: "One of the problems of writing about Julius is that it is difficult to state anything with certainty."¹ For the purposes of this paper, Eastman's life and career will only be briefly summarized.

Eastman was a skilled singer and performed the vocals for the Grammy-nominated recording of Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King*. His skills as a composer and performer garnered him some attention during his lifetime, but his eccentricities may have been just as well-known. One outrageous example comes from a 1975 performance of John Cage's *Song Books* by Julius Eastman at the Eastman School of Music.

During a performance of Cage's theater piece *Songbooks* that was chaotic in the best sense of the word, Eastman performed the segment of *Songbooks* that was merely the instruction, "Give a lecture." Never shy about his gayness, Eastman lectured on sex, with a young man and woman as volunteers. He undressed the young man onstage, and attempted to undress the woman, who resisted. The next day, the ever-mild-mannered Cage gave an angry lecture about the misuse of performances of his music, and, before

¹ Mary Jane Leach, "The Julius Eastman Project," last modified November 8, 2005, accessed September 15, 2015, <http://www.mjleach.com/eastman.htm>.

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our incredulous eyes, pounded his fist on the piano to punctuate his words: “the freedom in my music does not mean the freedom to be irresponsible!”²

Eastman’s sometimes shocking behavior, his outspokenness, and his unwillingness to conform contributed to Eastman’s inability to support himself towards the end of his life. “Julius Eastman ... died in 1990 and [his] final years ... spiraled out of control to the point where he was living in Tompkins Square Park.”³ The musical community is fortunate that Mary Jane Leach has compiled surviving manuscripts and other Eastman related documents on her website.⁴

When addressing the life and career of Julius Eastman, one must be made acutely aware of his race and sexuality. Eastman was a homosexual African-American man living in a musical community dominated by white heterosexual males. The decade in which this paper is being written (the 2010’s) has seen drastic socio-political disturbances, the likes of which have not been witnessed since, perhaps, the first Civil Rights Movement that took place in the mid-20th century. In the 2010’s the Supreme Court of the United States legalized same-sex marriage, the United States elected an African-American as president for the second time, police brutality against the African-American community is becoming increasingly visible, and the War on Drugs that have put millions of African-Americans in prison for non-violent drug offenses may be coming to a close with both liberal and conservative politicians calling for the legalization of marijuana. For those living through these 21st century events, it is important to consider what life may have been like before the progress made in this generation for someone like Julius Eastman in the late 20th century. His pride and convictions can be heard in his music and through the

² "Unjust Malaise Liner Notes," accessed September 15, 2015,
http://www.newworldrecords.org/album.cgi?rm=view&album_id=15097.

³ Leach, "The Julius Eastman Project."

⁴ Ibid.

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transparent titles he gives his pieces like *Gay Guerrilla*. Eastman clearly wanted his music to not only mean something but to do something.

Julius Eastman let his social circumstances effect his music. Louis Andriessen wrote elegantly about the role social conditioning plays in an artist's life:

Many composers view the act of composing as, somehow, above social conditioning. I contest that. How you arrange your musical material, the techniques you use and the instruments you score for, are largely determined by your own social circumstances and listening experience, and the availability of financial support. I do agree, though, that abstract musical material – pitch, duration and rhythm – are beyond social conditioning: it is found in nature. However, the moment the musical material is ordered it becomes culture and hence a social entity.⁵

Eastman's social condition led him to fight through his music for the marginalized demographics that he represented. About his piece *Gay Guerrilla* he says, in no veiled terms, that if there were an uprising of homosexuals against the oppressive majority, he would gladly sacrifice his own blood for the cause of homosexual rights. Eastman stated that "These [titles of his works], either I glorify them or they glorify me."⁶ Eastman sought to glorify his gayness and to glorify his race and his ancestors through his music.

Interest in the composer Julius Eastman has been increasing over the past decade. This is due to several factors including Mary Jane Leach's discovery of several original manuscripts of Eastman's music, the release of an anthology of his recorded works titles *Unjust Malaise*⁷, and several interested musicians have begun digging deeper into the composer's life and music, both of which are equally compelling.

⁵ Tom Service, "A guide to Louis Andriessen's music," The Guardian, last modified October 15, 2012, accessed September 15, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2012/oct/15/louis-andriessen-classical-music-guide>.

⁶ Julius Eastman, *Unjust Malaise*, New World Records, 2005, compact disc.

⁷ Eastman, *Unjust Malaise*.

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Mary Jane Leach was perhaps the first person to believe that Eastman's music was important; as evidenced by a very long and difficult journey she has been on since 1998 to rediscover Eastman's scores and recordings to secure his legacy. Eastman's music was raw, transparent, and honest. Transparency in structure and clarity of content are traits belonging to most minimal music, but, according to Mary Jane Leach, honesty was something lacking in the music scene in which Eastman was a part of in the 70's and 80's. She writes:

I didn't know Julius all that well, but I did have conversations with him about composers of that time, and he was dismissive of a lot of them. I think that what it boiled down to was integrity. He had radar that could detect bullshit (and there was a lot of that going around, a lot of posing [in the Downtown New York music scene in the early 80's]). He greatly admired Meredith Monk's music, for instance, perhaps because it was so honest. Indeed, I just looked at the program notes for the premiere of [*The Holy Presence of Joan d'Arc*], and the first sentence is "Find presented a work of art, in your name, full of honor, integrity, and boundless courage." That could be Julius's manifesto, a dedication to creating works of art with integrity...⁸

There is certainly no evidence of dishonesty in Eastman's works. Like other minimalist composers, Eastman gave very clear, descriptive, and simple names to their works, like *In C*, *Violin Phase*, *Trio for Strings*, etc. Eastman's titles went beyond musical descriptions with titles like *If You're So Smart, Why Aren't you Rich?*, *Gay Guerrilla*, *Dirty Nigger*, *Crazy Nigger*, *Evil Nigger*, etc.

The Title of the Piece

There is valuable musical knowledge that research on *Evil Nigger* will yield, but, perhaps more importantly, is the socio-political discussions that may be sparked by such a piece. The honesty of pieces like *Evil Nigger* is of acute relevancy in 20th and early 21st centuries.

⁸ Leach, "The Julius Eastman Project."

Bringing this piece back to life is a delicate task due to a few factors: Its controversial title, the lack of instruction on the original manuscript, and the importance of staying true to the composer's original intentions. To commence an analysis of a deeper extra-musical meaning behind *Evil Nigger*, one should begin by reading the following portion of the transcription of Julius Eastman's spoken introduction from a concert at Northwestern University in which he and three other pianists performed *Gay Guerilla*, *Evil Nigger*, and *Crazy Nigger*:

In the beginning of the introduction, Eastman discusses the musical components of the works that are to be performed. Next he explains the extra-musical intent of the pieces: Now, there was a little problem with the titles of the piece. There are some students and one faculty member who felt that the titles were somehow derogatory in some manner, being that the word Nigger is in it. These particular titles, the reason I use them, is because, in fact, I use, there's a whole series of these pieces. And they're called, they can be called a "Nigger series". Now the reason I use that particular word is because, for me it has a, what I call, a basicness about it. That is to say, I feel that in any case the first niggers were of course field niggers and upon that is really the basis of what I call the American Economic System. Without field niggers you wouldn't really have such a great and grand economy that we have. So that is what I call the first and great nigger, field niggers. And what I mean by niggers is that thing which is fundamental. That person or thing that attains to a basicness, a fundamentalness, and eschews that thing which is superficial or, can we say, elegant. A nigger for me is that kind of thing which is, attains himself or herself to the ground of anything, you see. And that's what I mean by nigger. So there are many niggers, there are many kinds of niggers. There might be, there are of course, 99 names of Allah but then there are 52 niggers. And so therefore, we are playing two of these niggers.⁹

Eastman goes on to explain the meaning of *Gay Guerrilla* which is equally fascinating. I encourage readers to listen to this introduction which can be heard on the *Unjust Malaise* anthology.

My interpretation of Eastman's explanation of his "Nigger Series" is as follows: He is essentially utilizing a method that other oppressed groups have used that involves taking a symbol or word used by the oppressors and turning it into an icon of pride. A "star of David"

⁹ Eastman, *Unjust Malaise*. Partial transcript from Track #8: Julius Eastman's spoken introduction to the Northwestern University concert.

was used on people during the Nazi holocaust to identify Jews and now the same symbol adorns the flag of modern Israel.¹⁰ Pink triangles were used by Nazis to identify homosexuals and others who were seen as sexual deviants and now an upside down pink triangle is an official symbol of the gay pride movement.¹¹ “Nigger” was (and unfortunately still is) a derogatory term used to demean and dehumanize African-Americans. The term was first applied to those slaves brought from Africa to the New World to tend to the fields in lieu of the type heavy machinery that makes mass production possible today. Eastman wants to glorify his ancestors by making a statement to White America that those racists who called and still call African-Americans Niggers were special and without them the United States of America would be far cry from the great nation it is today. Julius Eastman fought, through his art, to glorify the race that is simultaneously responsible for and systematically undermined by the powerful economy of the United States of America.

Eastman may have also been influenced by Malcom X’s thoughts on “Field Negros.” Malcolm X believed that “House Negros,” those slaves allowed to live in the same house as their masters, were essentially domesticated humans who could afford to be passive towards their oppressors because they lived a relatively good life. Malcolm X glorified what he called Field Negros. These were the Africans who were in the majority during slavery. He believed they were intelligent and brave and that they, not the House Negros, would fight and flee if given the chance. Malcom X believed that the distinction exists to this day; he believed that he was a Field Negro.

¹⁰ "Judaism: The Star of David - Magen David," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed September 15, 2015, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/star.html>.

¹¹ Tina Gianoulis, "Pink Triangle," GLBTQ Archives, last modified 2004, accessed September 15, 2015, http://www.glbhqarchive.com/ssh/pink_triangle_S.pdf.

The instrumentation of the piece

Nearly every source one will come across regarding *Evil Nigger*, *Gay Guerilla*, and *Crazy Nigger* identifies these pieces as being written for multiple pianos. According to Eastman, *Evil Nigger* is an open instrumentation work for 10-18 instruments, ideally instruments within the same family (i.e. strings, brass, etc.) Eastman briefly discusses his vision for the orchestration of this piece in his opening talk at the Northwestern University concert:

Now, these are three pieces that can be played by any number of instruments. ... If melody instruments are playing probably a good number would be somewhere in the area of maybe ten instruments, ten to eighteen instruments; usually of the same family. So therefore, another version could be for, let's say, eighteen string instruments.¹²

When creating a critical edition score of *Evil Nigger*, one may be tempted to create a score for four pianos that will reflect the performance given of this piece at Northwestern University. The power and beauty of the piece are captured on the recording, but mimicking that performance would not reflect the open nature of the piece.

Kyle Gann has written that *Evil Nigger*, *Gay Guerilla*, and *Crazy Nigger* are scored for four pianos in multiple publications.¹³ Others have written the same; simply do a quick online search for these three works and you will find that most describe these pieces as being for four pianos; I hope to correct this common and reasonable error. In a pleasant and informative conversation I had with Dr. Gann via e-mail, he gives his rather convincing reasoning behind his statements on the instrumentation of these works despite Eastman's own intentions:

Well, obviously we can't deny that Julius's intentions must have been what he said they were. But the three pieces were only played on pianos during his lifetime; the scores use both treble and bass clefs; *Crazy Nigger* (I think) ends with a harmonic series played across a seven-octave range, with quite a few extra performers brought in on the last page; and there are very few other instruments I could imagine using. I managed *Gay*

¹² Eastman, *Unjust Malaise*. Partial transcript from Track #8: Julius Eastman's spoken introduction to the Northwestern University concert.

¹³ Kyle Gann, "The Miraculous Revival of Julius Eastman," Post Classic, last modified September 4, 2005, accessed September 15, 2015, http://www.artsjournal.com/postclassic/2005/09/the_miraculous_revival_of_juli.html.

Guerrilla with guitars, and it wasn't an easy transition. It had been popular since [Terry Riley's] In C to write pieces for open instrumentation, but I think Julius was kidding himself somewhat if he really thought these scores could be played with oboes and bassoons, or a brass complement. Strings possibly, but you'd have to do a lot of arranging, whereas the piano performances took place directly from the surviving scores.¹⁴

In this portion of our conversation, Dr. Gann addresses *Gay Guerrilla* and *Crazy Nigger*; this paper will only directly address those issues as they pertain to *Evil Nigger*.

Part of the power and beauty that comes from the original recording of *Evil Nigger* is due to its fast tempo, which is around 144 B.P.M. Dr. Gann is correct to believe that playing this piece with any wind instrument would be difficult; however, one must consider the following: 1) Though Eastman's original manuscript for *Evil Nigger* does contain instances of different adjacent clefs, there is not one instance of different clefs being connected to suggest the type of grand-staff one would use for a piano composition 2) the original manuscript contains no tempo markings. If an ensemble of violins, violas, and cellos were to attempt a performance of this work, they could (with a bit of endurance training) perform *Evil Nigger* at the tempo heard in the recording from the Northwestern University concert. The performance of this work at 144 B.P.M., as Dr. Gann alludes to, by wind instruments would be significantly more difficult than a performance by an ensemble of percussion or string instruments.

The amount of solo and ensemble repertoire with extreme technical challenges for wind instruments has increased over the past century. With the early to mid-20th century avant-garde composers came an increasing need for players of all instruments to be able to read and perform music that would be inconceivable to musicians of the 19th century. Underselling the abilities of wind instrumentalists may be ill-advised in light of modern wind virtuosi and repertoire.

Consider Michael Gordon's piece for seven bassoons, *Rushes*. The first ten minutes of *Rushes*

¹⁴ Kyle Gann, e-mail message to author, June 17, 2015

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(along with much of the rest of the piece) contain nearly constant 16th notes. This type of motion is made physically possible by the dove-tailing of measures of silence with measures of 16th notes between the various players. The tempo of *Rushes* is 125 B.P.M., which is 19 B.P.M. slower than *Evil Nigger*. Even if an ensemble of double-reed instruments attempted to perform *Evil Nigger* at 144 B.P.M., despite the absence of a tempo marking in the original manuscript, Eastman's prescription of an ensemble with 10-18 instruments would make this relatively easy; the musicians would have ample time to tank up on air without creating any gaps in sound production

The tempo at which it is performed in the original recording effectively energizes the music, so it may be wise to not go significantly slower than 144 B.P.M. If an ensemble wishes to perform this piece significantly slower than 144 B.P.M. it should be for good reason, i.e. if an ensemble consists of mostly of low brass instruments or double reed instruments. It is also important to remember that the structure and length of the piece will remain exactly the same regardless of the tempo due to the time-based nature of the piece.

Expanded Performance Instructions

There will be concise instructions on how to play the piece immediately preceding the score.

This piece is motive-based, time-based, and improvisatory. What “motive-based” refers to is music that is void of the transitionary and developmental elements that are found in other types of music. The motivic and time-based nature of *Evil Nigger* are explicitly related; during this motive-based piece, musicians play musical gestures for a specified amount of time, and once that time has passed, musicians move on to the next group of musical gestures which are referred to as sections. In this edition of *Evil Nigger*, sections will be denoted with large Arabic

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numerals. Sections refer to the time-frames specified in the original manuscript, i.e. section 31 begins at the 15-minute juncture and ends on the 15-minutes and 30-seconds juncture which also marks the beginning of section 32, and so on. There will be one or more motives in every section, and any of these motives can be performed by members of the ensemble at any point in the section they are within. *Evil Nigger* is improvisatory; one is given musical material that can generally be played in any octave, can start or stop at any time, and musicians can decide to play several different motives within a section or, in the case of players of polyphonic instruments, play multiple motives simultaneously.

This edition prescribes a minimum of 10-13 players and this prescription is based on two factors: 1) Eastman's description of *Evil Nigger* as a piece for 10-18 instruments and 2) at the densest sections of the piece, there are 13 motives available to performers. If polyphonic instruments are used, i.e. piano, classical guitar, etc., there should be at least 4 musicians in the ensemble.

In the original manuscript for *Evil Nigger*, Eastman wrote in no rests nor any other any indication in regards to rests or silence. There should be no silence for the majority of the piece; however, from section 47 until the end of the piece moments of silence are acceptable due to the sparse nature of the musical material. The motives present in sections 47, 48, and 49, are predominantly long tones. If an ensemble consists of wind instruments, players should hold the long tones until their air support begins to waver.

There should be a large time-counter at the front of the stage facing the musicians or each player should have a stop watch of some kind. The players should be as synchronized as possible, so a large clock that everyone can see will be preferable. Ensembles will surely come up with creative ways to deal with this issue. Ensembles that perform *Evil Nigger* need either a conductor

or leader who plays within the ensemble. A conductor's role for the piece will entail keeping everyone on the same pulse and signaling the changing of sections. A leader who plays within the ensemble can attempt to take on the tasks assigned to a conductor. If a group has a significant enough amount of rehearsal time, the only task an ensemble leader might need to carry out is signaling the beginning of *tutti* sections.

Black note-heads are the equivalent of 16th notes (4 notes per pulse). When black note-heads are marked with dashes, performers may repeat that particular note indefinitely with a 16th note duration before moving on to the next note of the motive or to a new motive. If there is more than one note in a motive that contains dashed notes, one may repeat a note as often as one wishes before moving on to the next repeated note. In the original manuscript, there are open note-heads with stems in the first three sections of the piece with a “2” written above them; this is an indication that what appear as half notes are the length of two tied black note-heads. A “2” never appears above another note after the first three sections. Eastman did not bother writing a “2” above the half notes after the first three sections, but every subsequent half note should be treated the same except for the half notes with a “3” written above them. Half notes with a “3” written above them are the duration of three tied black note-heads.

Towards the end of the piece, there are motives that have a note in parentheses above a lower note. Whenever possible, one should play the lower note. If the note is out of an instrument's range, one should play the next closest higher octave. Eastman deliberately wrote notes with several ledger lines; he would not have gone to that trouble unless he wanted something played in a specific register. For example, in section 47 he wrote a C1 which is written with five ledger lines below the bass clef.

Analysis

Eastman spoke about the musical process that was applied to the three works performed on four pianos at the Northwestern University performance. Before reading a brief analysis of *Evil Nigger*, it is important to read the following transcript from the spoken introduction to the Northwestern University performance:

I wanna say a few words about the music. Number one is: There are three pieces on the program. The first is called *Evil Nigger*, and the second is called *Gay Guerilla*, and the third is called *Crazy Nigger*. Now, these are three pieces that can be played by any number of instruments. The reason I have them for piano here is for practical reason. One can play this piece, therefore, with just four people and then four pianos. But if melody instruments are playing probably a good number would be somewhere in the area of maybe ten instruments, ten to eighteen instruments; usually of the same family. So therefore, another version could be for, let's say, eighteen string instruments. These particular pieces, formally, are an attempt to, what I call, make organic music. That is to say the third part of any part, of the third measure or the third section, the third part, has to contain all of the information of the first two parts and then go on from there. So therefore, unlike romantic music or classical music where you have actually different sections and you have these section which, for instance, [are] in great contrast to the first section or to some other section of the piece. These pieces, they're not exactly perfect...they're not perfect. But there is an attempt to make every section contain all of the information of the previous sections or else taking out information at a gradual and logical rate.¹⁵

Motives and Form

Eastman constructed *Evil Nigger* using simple motives; the five principal motives he uses are (A) a descending minor third with a stepwise passing-tone, (B) a descending thirds progression, (C) a second inversion G-minor chord which highlights the goal-notes of the D-minor descending thirds progression, (D) a major second, and (E) a minor second. The seconds appear in both ascending and descending forms but due to the repetitive nature of the performance of the motives, the listener will most likely not be able to discern a difference

¹⁵ Eastman, *Unjust Malaise*. Partial transcript from Track #8: Julius Eastman's spoken introduction to the Northwestern University concert.

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between a motive that begins with ascending motion and one that begins with descending motion.

All other musical material outside of the five principal motives consist of just one note, with the exception of the two triadic motives (an F-major and A-minor triad) in section 9. The addition and subtraction of the one-note motives generally reinforce the tertian harmonies of *Evil Nigger* because, typically, the pitches of the added one-note motives are a third away from the one-note motive(s) of the preceding section. The intervals of major and minor thirds are essential to the form of this piece and they are the basis of the A and B motives.

Evil Nigger contains three distinct segments. Segment 1 lasts until section 21 or 12'15", segment two consists of sections 22 through 37, lasting from 12'15" until 16'45", and finally segment 3 consists of sections 38 through 49, lasting from 16'45" until 21'05". The first segment encompasses over half of the piece while the proceeding segments each have less sections than the segments that precede them. The music begins a gradual reduction in rhythmic activity from the outset of segment 2 until the end of the piece. It is not entirely clear why Eastman chose to close out the piece in a rhythmically anticlimactic manner, though in much of segment 3 the lengths of each section are generally shorter than preceding sections, which results in a faster harmonic motion due to the addition of pitches throughout this segment.

The ostinato-like application of the A and B motives permeate the structure of *Evil Nigger*. From the beginning of the piece until around the half-way point of the piece (section 20), the A motive occurs in every section while other notes and motives are added and subtracted. The B motive is also infused into the piece in various ways and creates cohesion; it appears in 13 of the first 20 sections. In section 20 both the A and B motives are to be played in every key.

There is an alternating sequence of 3 sections with the B motive and without the A motive followed by 1 section with the A motive and without the B motive from section 22 to section 37.

In segment 1, the B motive is the dominant musical motive; it functions like a refrain from a popular song or as the first section of a rondo as it occurs in its *tutti* form at regular intervals throughout segment 1. There is a gradual decay of the influence of the B motive after segment 1. It is a powerful force in the first 21 sections; not only does it appear 13 times, it is performed by all players simultaneously 5 of these times. *Tutti* performances of this motive are not performed at any point after section 18. From section 22-36, the B motive appears more often than the A motive; however, when the A motive appears in these sections it is the only motive being played while when the B motive appears in these sections it is always accompanied by other material. The B motive is not heard again after section 36 in its melodic form while every appearance of the A motive between sections 37-45 are completely unaccompanied by other material.

Sections 19-21 are crucial structural markers for the piece; they mark the transition into Segment 2. In section 19 and section 20 the A and B motives occur in all keys. The chromatic saturation that begins in section 19 and ends at the conclusion of section 20 is the apex of the accumulation of notes a third away from one another that began in section 13. The last section, of Segment 1, section 21, is the B motive in its original D-minor form.

Segment 3, which begins at section 38, marks the first time that Eastman instructs players to hold notes indefinitely. The set of long tones in section 38 contains only the notes of the (B) motive. With each new section after section 38, a new pitch is added to the set of long tones with the exception of the sections where the A motive interrupts the development. The set of long tones is paired with a consistent six-motive collection that had begun its construction in section

32 with the introduction of the three-note length C-sharps. The only motives performers are left to choose from in section 47 are held notes. At section 47 the set of long tones has grown from the five notes of the (B) motive to 10 different notes. Eleven different notes are present in the set of long tones in the final section in addition to the A motive.

Competing Tonal Centers

The B motive occurs in two distinct tonalities: D minor and D-flat/C-Sharp minor. The first instance of the B motive in D-flat/C-Sharp minor occurs in section 15 and is preceded by four sections in which notes belonging to the new tonality are added. The various motives that occur in sections 11 through 18 are a mixture of the two tonalities. Eleven distinct tones are present between the one-note gestures in section 18. The chromatic saturation that occurs in sections 19 and 20 is the outcome of gradually addition of notes that began in section eleven; when combined, the D-natural minor and D-flat/C-sharp natural minor scales encompass all 12 tones. C-sharp plays an important role in segment 3; it can be heard distinctively as the only note of the entire piece which receives a duration equal to the length of three 16th notes. In section 38, which is the first section of segment 3, there are eleven different motives and only two do not contain notes from a D natural-minor tonality which makes the juxtaposition of the repeating C-sharps in this section and others like it quite striking.

Why does this piece matter?

Studying *Evil Nigger* and other works of Eastman's will offer musicians insight into a unique process of composition that is only recently being studied in a significant way. As time stubbornly progresses, musicians are faced with the burdensome notion that everything has

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already been done. Perhaps this notion is true, but it is also likely that composers of every generation will feel the burden of innovation. Musicians should therefore open themselves to novel means of artistic creation yielded from the study of composers past and present. Studying Eastman's music will give a voice back to one of the forgotten figures of minimal music and inspire artistic representatives of marginalized communities to fight with fervor for a station equal to that of European, heterosexual males. *Evil Nigger* will teach us to consider our impact, or lack thereof, on society when writing and performing music. Jacques Attali wrote: “[The musician] is one of society’s first gazes upon itself...”¹⁶ What should society wish to see when gazing upon itself in the mirror of its art?

¹⁶ Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi, fifth printing, 1996. (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 12.

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<http://www.newworldrecords.org/uploads/fileeEp3v.pdf>

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Special thanks to:

My family and friends for enduring me.

My comrades in New Music who helped me with this project by reading through the early editions of the critical edition score:

Anna Mamassian – James Alexander – Storm Benjamin – Jacob Webster -

Gözde Çakır – Ryan Ramsey – Jason Aylward

And to these wonderful musicians and musicologists who were generous with their knowledge and patient with me and my many inquiries.

Mary Jane Leach

Kyle Gann

Jace Clayton

Ryan Wayne Dohoney

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Joseph Kubera

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Playing Instructions for Julius Eastman's *Evil Nigger* edited by Frank Nawrot

Concise Instructions:

10-13 players of melodic or monophonic instruments minimum; 18 musicians maximum. A minimum of 4 keyboard instruments only may also be used. Everyone should play to the same pulse (124-144 BPM). Black note heads are $\frac{1}{4}$ th the duration of the pulse (like 16th notes). White note heads with stems (they look like half notes) are the length of two tied black note heads. White note heads with a “3” written above them are the length of three tied black note heads. Sections are all of the music contained within the rounded squares. There are 49 sections. Musicians will play each section for the specified lengths before moving on to the next section. The small musical motives in each section can be played at any time at any octave and be repeated as often as one wishes. Motives may be performed in random order. It is not necessary for an individual player to get through all the motives of a section. The motive marked with *tutti* is to be performed in unison before moving on to other motives. Dashes above or below note heads indicate that these notes are to be repeated (with new attacks, not as long tones) as often as one desires before moving on to the next note of a motive or to a new motive.

Expanded Instructions:

- 1) This piece is motive-based, time based, and improvisatory.
- 2) This piece requires a minimum of 10-13 players of monophonic instruments (i.e. saxophone, trombone, flute, etc.) or at least 4 pianists. If 4 or 5 pianists are used, musicians should play at least two motives at all times except for the sections with less than two motives available.

- 3) Sections are contained within rounded rectangles and are marked with large Arabic numerals.
- 4) Motives are contained on staves with double bar lines. Motives can begin, end, restart, or repeat at any time. Players must play to the same pulse. Motives can generally be played in any octave.
- 5) Players can play any motive at any time that is within the section the ensemble is in. Do not play motives from previous or subsequent sections.
- 6) Black note-heads are the equivalent of 16th notes (4 notes per pulse). When black note-heads are marked with dashes, performers may repeat that particular note indefinitely at a 16th note duration before moving on to the next note of the motive or to a new motive. If there is more than one note in a motive that contains dashed notes, one may repeat a note as often as one wishes before moving on to the next repeated note. Half-notes should be the duration of 2 filled black note-heads; the half-notes with “3” above them should be the duration of 3 black note-heads- these notes enter at section 32.
- 7) Dynamics are not specified. Dynamics will be shaped naturally through the density of motives.
- 8) The first motive of the piece (the A motive) that appears is a recurring one. The last D of the motive may be repeated as much as one desires before beginning or new motive or repeating the A motive.
- 9) The first new motive (the B motive) of section 2 is a recurring one. It appears in the form it takes in section 2 as well as a *tutti* version which first appears in section 4.
 - *Tutti* versions are clearly marked with the word *tutti* beneath it. All players will perform the motive together as written. Once reaching the repeating D, players may repeat this note indefinitely before moving on to a new motive.
- 10) Performers must practice the A motive and B motive in every key. Fluency in these motives in any key will help players avoid a bias towards “easy” keys in sections 19 and 20.

- 11) The tempo of this piece is flexible. It should not exceed 144 BPM. All players must play to the same pulse.
- 12) There should be a large time-counter at the front of the stage facing the musicians or each player should have a stop watch of some kind. The more in-sync each player is to the same time the better, so a large clock that everyone can see will be preferable. The stopwatch will keep the group moving along through the various sections. For example: Section 3 will begin when the stopwatch reads 1:05 and end when it reads 1:30. Section 4 will then start at 1:30, and so on.
- 13) The group needs either a conductor or leader who plays within the ensemble. A conductor's role for the piece will entail keeping everyone on the same pulse and signaling the changing of sections. A leader who plays within the ensemble can attempt to take on the tasks assigned to a conductor. If a group has a significant enough amount of rehearsal time, the only task an ensemble leader will need to carry out is signaling the beginning of *tutti* sections.
- 14) In section 38, whole notes indicate long tones. For wind instruments, play these notes as long as you can, take a rest, and then resume playing. For keyboard and plucked string instruments, strike the note and let it ring until it fades out before resuming play. For bowed string instruments, you may choose to pluck the notes or you can bow the whole note motives for a long period of time before taking the bow off the strings and resuming play.
- 15) There should be no silence at any point until section 47. Though individual players may take rests, the cumulative output of sound should not result in any silence. If an ensemble of pianists are performing the work, rests must be very brief. From section 47 until the end, moments of silence are acceptable due to the sparse nature of the material.
- 16) Near the end of the piece, there are motives that have a note in parentheses above a lower note. Whenever possible, play the lower note. If the note is out of your range, play the next closest higher octave.

0:00 – 0:30



1*

↓

0:30 – 1:05



2

↓

1:05 – 1:30



3

*Black note-heads are the equivalent of 16th notes (4 notes per pulse). When black note-heads are marked with dashes, performers may repeat that particular note indefinitely before moving on to next note of motive or to a new motive. If there is more than one note in a motive contains dashed notes, one may repeat the first note as often as one wishes before moving on to the next repeated note. Half-notes should be the duration of 2 filled black note-heads; the half-notes with “3” above them should be the duration of 3 black note-heads, these notes enter at section 32.

1:30 – 1:50



Tutti.*



4

*After all players perform this motive together once; the following D's may be repeated indefinitely before moving on to a new motive that appears under the horizontal line.

1:50 – 2:10

5

Musical score for measure 5. The score consists of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The first staff has a dotted quarter note followed by a dotted eighth note. The second staff has a dotted quarter note followed by a dotted eighth note. The third staff has a dotted quarter note followed by a dotted eighth note. The fourth staff has a dotted quarter note followed by a dotted eighth note.

2:10 – 2:40

6

Musical score for measure 6. The score consists of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The first staff has a dotted quarter note followed by a dotted eighth note. The second staff has a dotted quarter note followed by a dotted eighth note. The third staff has a dotted quarter note followed by a dotted eighth note. The fourth staff has a dotted quarter note followed by a dotted eighth note.

*Play the individual notes of the motives marked with “Long” longer than usual.

2:40 – 3:10



Tutti



7



3:10 – 3:40



8



3:40 – 4:10

9



4:10 – 4:55

10



4:55 – 5:40



Tutti

Four staves of music, each consisting of two measures. The first staff uses a treble clef, the second staff uses a bass clef, the third staff uses a treble clef, and the fourth staff uses a bass clef. The music includes various note heads and rests, with some blue ink used to highlight specific notes or rests.

11

5:40 – 6:10

12*



6:10 – 6:30

13



*Last motive of section 12 appears to be cut off in original score.

6:30 – 7:00

A musical score enclosed in a rounded rectangular frame. The top half shows a bass clef staff with a continuous series of eighth notes. The bottom half shows a treble clef staff with a single measure consisting of two eighth notes followed by a fermata.

14



7:00 – 7:30

15

A musical score enclosed in a rounded rectangular frame. It features two treble clef staves at the top, each with a single note. Below them is a bass clef staff with a measure containing six eighth notes. At the bottom is another treble clef staff with a single measure consisting of two eighth notes followed by a fermata.

7:30 – 8:00

16*

The musical score consists of five staves of music, enclosed in a rounded rectangular frame. The top staff is a treble clef staff with two eighth notes followed by a quarter note. The second staff is a treble clef staff with three eighth notes. The third staff is a treble clef staff with three eighth notes. The fourth staff is a treble clef staff with three eighth notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef staff with six eighth notes.

*Last motive of section 16 appears to be cut off in original score.

8:00 – 8:30

17



8:30 – 9:30

Tutti



18

19

9:30 – 11:00



To be played in all keys



20

11:00 – 11:45



21

11:45 – 12:15



Perform as written

12:15 – 12:35

22

A musical staff in G clef, common time. It consists of two measures. The first measure has a single note on the second line. The second measure has notes on the first, third, and fifth lines. The bass staff below shows notes on the first, third, and fifth lines.

↓

12:35 – 12:55

23

A musical staff in G clef, common time. It consists of two measures. The first measure has notes on the first, third, and fifth lines. The second measure has notes on the first, third, and fifth lines. The bass staff below shows notes on the first, third, and fifth lines.

↓

12:55 – 13:15

24

A musical staff in G clef, common time. It consists of three measures. The first measure has notes on the first, third, and fifth lines. The second measure has notes on the first, third, and fifth lines. The third measure has notes on the first, third, and fifth lines. The bass staff below shows notes on the first, third, and fifth lines.

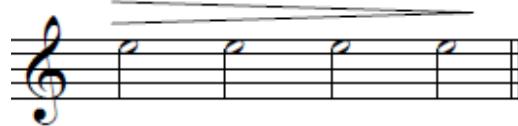
↓

13:15 – 13:25

25

A musical staff in G clef, common time. It consists of four measures. The first measure has a dotted half note. The second measure has a dotted half note. The third measure has a quarter note. The fourth measure has a dotted half note. The bass staff below is empty.

13:25 – 13:50

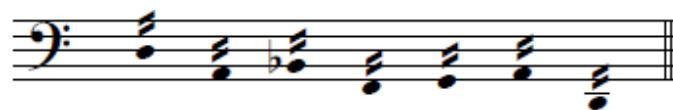


Very broad decrescendo*



26

↓
13:50 – 14:10



27

*On the original score there are several E's written with a long decrescendo above them. This may indicate a long and broad dynamic change over the course of section 26.

14:10 – 14:30

A musical score enclosed in an oval frame. It consists of five staves of music. The top staff is treble clef, two sharps key signature, common time. The second staff is treble clef, common time. The third staff is bass clef, one sharp key signature, common time. The fourth staff is treble clef, common time. The fifth staff is bass clef, common time.

28



14:30 – 14:40

29

A musical score enclosed in a rectangular frame. It consists of two staves of music. The top staff is treble clef, common time. The bottom staff is bass clef, common time.

14:40 – 15:00

The musical score consists of six staves of music, enclosed in a large rounded rectangular frame. The staves are as follows:

- Staff 1: Treble clef, four measures of quarter notes.
- Staff 2: Treble clef, three measures of quarter notes, followed by one measure of two eighth notes.
- Staff 3: Treble clef, four measures of quarter notes.
- Staff 4: Treble clef, four measures of half notes.
- Staff 5: Treble clef, five measures of half notes.
- Staff 6: Bass clef, six measures of quarter notes, with the third measure containing a single orange note.

30

15:00 – 15:30

31

The musical score contains six staves of music. The first two staves are in treble clef, the next three are in alto clef, and the last one is in bass clef. The time signature changes from common time to 6/8 at the beginning of the piece. The music consists of six measures. Each measure contains a single note: a dotted half note in the first five measures and a dotted quarter note in the sixth measure.

15:30 – 15:45

A musical score consisting of four staves. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a tempo marking of 3. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The third staff is a bass clef staff with a key signature of one sharp. The fourth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The score shows various note patterns across the staves.

32



15:45 – 15:53

A musical score consisting of two staves. The left staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The right staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The score shows a series of eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

33

15:53 – 16:08

34

Musical score for measure 34. The score consists of two staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It contains four measures of music. The first measure has three eighth notes followed by a rest. The second measure has three eighth notes followed by a rest. The third measure has three eighth notes followed by a rest. The fourth measure has three eighth notes followed by a rest. The bottom staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains five measures of music. The first measure has a dotted half note followed by a dotted quarter note. The second measure has a dotted half note followed by a dotted quarter note. The third measure has a dotted half note followed by a dotted quarter note. The fourth measure has a dotted half note followed by a dotted quarter note. The fifth measure has a dotted half note followed by a dotted quarter note.



16:08 – 16:23

35

Musical score for measure 35. The score consists of two staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It contains four measures of music. The first measure has three eighth notes followed by a rest. The second measure has three eighth notes followed by a rest. The third measure has three eighth notes followed by a rest. The fourth measure has three eighth notes followed by a rest. The bottom staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a dotted half note followed by a dotted quarter note. The second measure has a dotted half note followed by a dotted quarter note. The third measure has a dotted half note followed by a dotted quarter note. The fourth measure has a dotted half note followed by a dotted quarter note. The fifth measure has a dotted half note followed by a dotted quarter note. The sixth measure has a dotted half note followed by a dotted quarter note.

16:23 – 16:38

A musical score for four staves. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It consists of two measures of eighth notes. The second measure ends with a repeat sign. The middle staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. It consists of three measures of quarter notes. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It consists of two measures of eighth notes. The bottom staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It consists of two measures of eighth notes.

36



16:38 – 16:45

A musical score for one staff. The page number '37' is at the top left. The staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It consists of two measures. The first measure has a dotted half note followed by a half note. The second measure has a dotted half note followed by a half note.

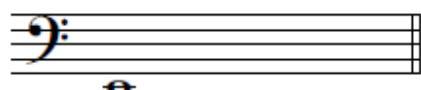
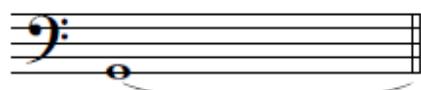
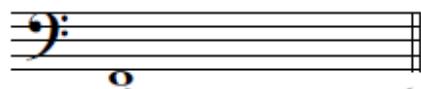
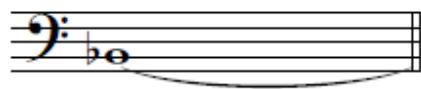
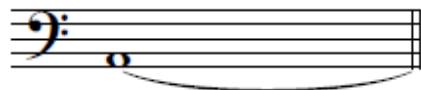
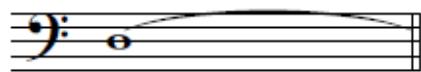
16:45 – 17:05

A musical score for section 38, enclosed in a large oval. The score consists of five staves. The top staff is treble clef, followed by a measure of four notes. The second staff is also treble clef, with a measure of four notes and a dynamic marking above the staff: $\overbrace{3\ 3\ 3\ 3}$. The third staff is treble clef, with a measure of four notes. The fourth staff is bass clef, with a single note and a broad crescendo line extending across the staff. The fifth staff is bass clef, with a single note and a broad crescendo line extending across the staff. The sixth staff is bass clef, with a single note and a broad crescendo line extending across the staff.

38

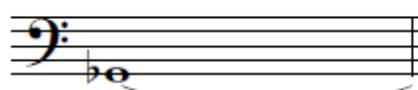
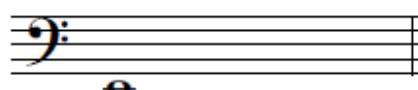
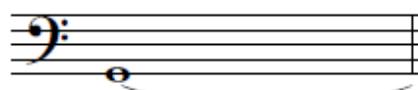
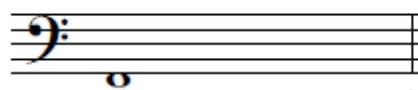
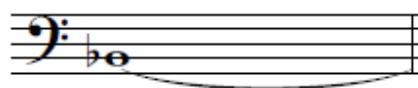
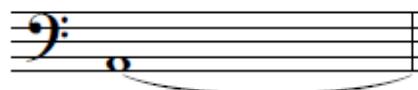
Same type of broad crescendo should be observed in this section as the one from section 26.

17:05 – 17:20



39

17:20 – 17:29



40
↓

17:29 – 17:34

41



17:34 – 17:42

The musical score consists of two staves at the top and seven staves at the bottom. The top section, enclosed in a rounded rectangular frame, contains two staves of treble clef music. The first staff has a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second staff has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and includes a measure with a triplet marking (3 3 3 3) over four eighth notes. The bottom section contains seven staves of bass clef music, each with a single note and a curved line underneath, indicating a sustained note. The notes are: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, and A3.

42

17:42 – 17:49

The musical score consists of two staves of music. The top staff uses a treble clef and has four measures. The first measure contains eighth notes with a sharp sign. The second measure contains quarter notes. The third measure contains quarter notes with a sharp sign above the staff, followed by three vertical strokes. The fourth measure contains quarter notes. The bottom staff uses a bass clef and has eight measures. Each measure contains a single note on the fourth line of the staff, with the note head pointing to the right. The notes are: open circle, open circle, filled circle with a sharp sign, open circle, open circle, open circle, filled circle with a sharp sign, and filled circle with a sharp sign.

43

17:49 – 17:55

44

Musical score for page 44. The top staff consists of three measures in treble clef, common time, with a key signature of one sharp. The first measure has a dotted half note followed by a quarter note. The second measure has a dotted half note followed by a quarter note. The third measure has a dotted half note followed by a quarter note. The bottom staff consists of ten measures in bass clef, common time, with a key signature of one sharp. The notes are eighth notes, each with a vertical stroke through it. The first measure has a single eighth note. The second measure has a single eighth note. The third measure has a single eighth note. The fourth measure has a single eighth note. The fifth measure has a single eighth note. The sixth measure has a single eighth note. The seventh measure has a single eighth note. The eighth measure has a single eighth note. The ninth measure has a single eighth note. The tenth measure has a single eighth note.

17:55 – 18:00

45

Musical score for page 45. The staff consists of four measures in treble clef, common time, with a key signature of one sharp. The first measure has a dotted half note followed by a quarter note. The second measure has a dotted half note followed by a quarter note. The third measure has a dotted half note followed by a quarter note. The fourth measure has a dotted half note followed by a quarter note.

18:00 – 18:05

46

The page contains ten staves of musical notation. The first three staves are in treble clef, and the remaining seven are in bass clef. The key signatures change every two staves. The first three staves have a key signature of one sharp. The next four staves have a key signature of one flat. The last three staves have a key signature of one flat. Measure numbers 18:00 and 18:05 are positioned at the top of the page.

18:05 – 18:35

47

18:35 – 19:35

48

19:35 – 21:05 (FINAL SECTION)

The musical score is enclosed in a decorative oval border. It consists of two systems of music. The top system starts with a treble clef, a sharp sign, and a 3/4 time signature. It features a single melodic line with eighth-note patterns. The bottom system consists of four bass staves, each with a bass clef and a common time signature. The bass parts feature sustained notes with grace notes and slurs. The score concludes with a final treble clef, a dynamic marking of f , and a key signature of one sharp.

49

E N D