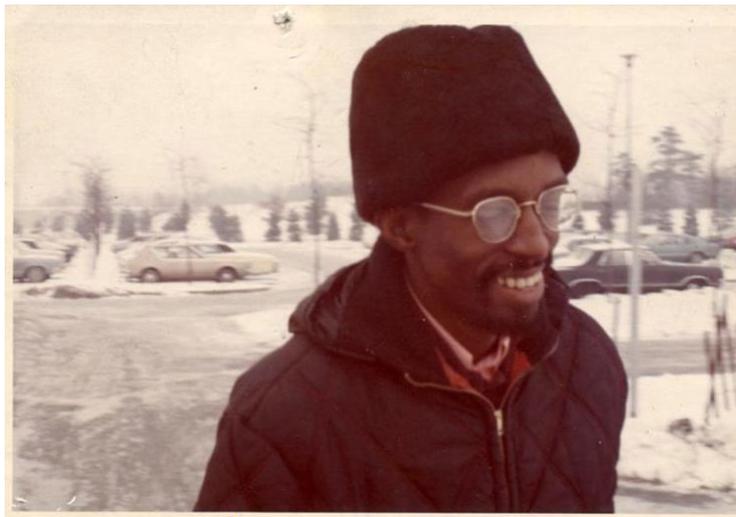


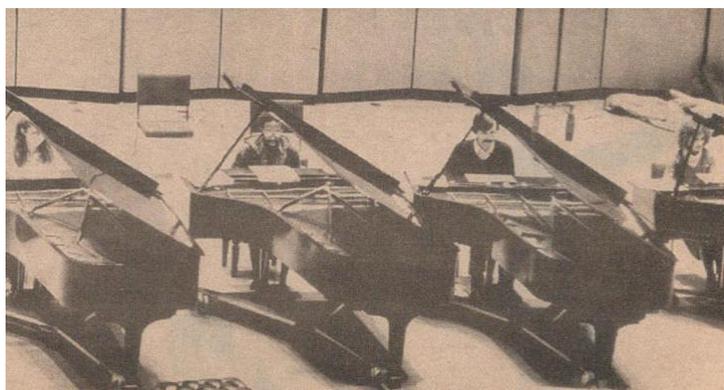
**MONDAY  
EVENING  
CONCERTS**

**JULIUS EASTMAN and  
SARAH HENNIES:  
'THE GENDER OF SOUND'**

January 14, 2019 | 8:00 PM  
Zipper Concert Hall



Julius Eastman



Northwestern University Concert, 1980



Sarah Hennies

**MONDAY EVENING CONCERTS JANUARY 14, 2019**

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**Julius Eastman and Sarah Hennies: THE GENDER OF SOUND**

Julius Eastman – **Gay Guerrilla** (1979) [30']

ECHOI Ensemble

Todd Moellenberg, piano  
Brendan Nguyen, piano  
Adam Tandler, piano  
Richard Valitutto, piano

*Intermission*

Sarah Hennies – **Contralto** (2016-17) [50']  
for video and live ensemble

ECHOI Ensemble

Madeline Falcone, violin  
Diana Wade, viola  
Judith Hamann, cello  
Matt Kline, bass  
Tim Feeney, percussion  
Sam Friedland, percussion  
Sidney Hopson, percussion

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## PROGRAM NOTES by Melinda Guillen

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On the subject of the value of art in the everyday lives of black people, famed feminist theorist, educator, and social activist bell hooks asserts, "Representation is a crucial location of struggle for any exploited and oppressed people asserting subjectivity and decolonization of the mind." It may seem as though issues of representation and identity are more openly addressed or expected in the visual arts; whereas other dimensions of culture—classical music, dance, fashion, literature, and so on—remain burdened by the conventions of their own respective and cyclical traditions. Furthermore, training and engagement with such creative forms of expression too often relegate the social and political realities of identity and representation to the periphery, if they are considered at all. Tonight's program is no such occasion.

For the second concert of its 2018-2019 season, Monday Evening Concerts combines two of its recent passions: its ongoing investigation into the life and work of the late, great Julius Eastman, and the introducing of important young composers to their programming. In this case, the program focuses on two groundbreaking works looking LGBTQ issues directly in the eye: Julius Eastman's powerful and courageous *Gay Guerrilla* (1979) and Sarah Hennies unique and profoundly moving *Contralto* (2017).

MEC Artistic Director Jonathan Hepfer's curatorial approach engages directly with the two-fold process, according to bell hooks, of how one identifies with any art form. The first is recognition of the familiar, where we see in art something that resembles what we know, and second, and perhaps more critically, the process of *defamiliarization*, which takes what we see or know and makes us look at it in a new way. This concert centers the struggle to be seen as both a persisting reality and cultural necessity and it extends it to include the struggle to be heard as tantamount. As the great James Baldwin expressed in the short story "Sonny's Blues" (1965), "All I know about music is that not many people ever really hear it. And even then, on the rare occasions when something opens within, and the music enters, what we mainly hear, or hear corroborated, are personal, private, vanishing evocations." With pleasure and gratitude, we welcome you to see, hear, familiarize, and defamiliarize together.

**Melinda Guillen** (b. 1984) is a writer, curator, and scholar specializing in postwar American contemporary art, conceptual art, minimalism, and feminist theory. She holds an MA in Curatorial Practices in the Public Sphere from University of Southern California and is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in Art History, Theory, and Criticism at UC San Diego. Her dissertation, "Don't Need You: Conceptual Art, Feminism, and Estrangement!" explores radical feminisms, refusal, power, and anti-intellectualism in the United States during the Vietnam era through the work of Lucy Lippard, Adrian Piper, and Lee Lozano.

### Julius Eastman (1940-1990) - *Gay Guerrilla* [texts compiled by Jonathan Hepfer]

Excerpts of Eastman's own words (in lieu of a traditional program note):

**Eastman's spoken introduction to his Northwestern University Concert (1980) on which his works *Evil Nigger*, *Gay Guerrilla* and *Crazy Nigger* were performed:** "These are three pieces that can be played by any number of instruments. The reason I have them for pianos here is for practical reason. One can play this piece, therefore, with just four people - and then four pianos. But if melody instruments were playing, probably a good number would be somewhere in the area of - maybe ten instruments - ten to eighteen instruments - and usually of the same family. And therefore another version could be for, let's say, eighteen stringed 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 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 actual different sections, and you have these sections where, for instance, in great contrast to the first section, or to some other section in the piece, these pieces, they're not exactly perfect yet - but there's an attempt to make every section contain all of the information from the previous sections or else taking out information at a gradual and logical rate...

Now, the reason I use 'Gay Guerrilla' - G U E R R I L L A - that one is because these names - let me put a little sub-system here - these names...either I glorify them or they glorify me. And in the case of 'guerrilla', that glorifies 'gay.' That is to say there aren't many gay guerrillas. I don't feel that gaydom does have that strength. So, therefore, I use that word in the hopes that they will... You see, at this point, I don't feel that gay guerrillas can really match with Afghani guerrillas or PLO guerrillas, but let us hope that in the future they might. You see, that's why I use the word 'guerrilla.' It means a guerrilla is, in any case, someone who is sacrificing his life for a point of view. And if there is a cause, and if it is a great cause, those who belong to that cause will sacrifice their blood, because without blood, there is no cause. So, therefore, that is the reason I use 'Gay Guerrilla,' in hopes that I might be one, if called upon to be one. (whispers) Okay... "

**1976 interview:** "What I am trying to achieve is to be what I am to the fullest - Black to the fullest, a musician to the fullest, and a homosexual to the fullest. It is important that I learn how to be, by that I mean accept everything about me."

**Autobiography written for a press release for a performance at the Kitchen in 1981:** "I have sung, played, and written music for a very long time, and the end is not in sight. I sang as a boy soprano and I still sing as a boy soprano 30 years later. I have played the old masters on the pianoforte and have appreciated their help and guidance. But 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."

**Sarah Hennies (b. 1979) - *Contralto* [program note by Sarah Hennies]**

*Contralto* is a one-hour work for video, strings, and percussion that exists in between the spaces of experimental music and documentary. The piece features a cast of transgender women speaking, singing, and performing vocal exercises accompanied by a dense and varied musical score that includes a variety of conventional and "non-musical" approaches to sound-making.

When a transgender man begins taking testosterone it causes his vocal cords to thicken and his voice deepens and drops into the so-called "masculine range." It is not widely known, however, that trans women's voices are unaffected by higher levels of estrogen in the body. Being a woman with a "male voice" creates a variety of difficult situations for trans women including prolonged and intensified dysphoria and higher risk of harassment and violence due to possibly exposing someone as trans unintentionally.

"*Contralto*" - defined in musical terms as "the lowest female singing voice" - uses the sound of trans women's voices to explore transfeminine identity from the inside and examines the intimate and peculiar relationship between gender and sound.

*Contralto* stars Alexandra Brandon, Alyssa Green, Anna McCormick, Dreia Spies, Sarang Umarji, and Josie Zanfordino.

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**TEXT to the hymn quoted in GAY GUERRILLA**

**Martin Luther - *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God***

A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood  
Of mortal ills prevailing,  
For still our ancient foe  
Doth seek to work his woe;  
His craft and power are great,  
And armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The Man of God's own choosing,  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is he;  
Lord Sabaoth is his name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph through us.  
The Prince of Darkness grim,—  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo! His doom is sure,—  
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers—  
No thanks to them—abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
Through him who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also:  
The body they may kill:  
God's truth abideth still,  
His kingdom is for ever.

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## BIOGRAPHIES

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**Julius Eastman** (1940-1990) was an artist who, as a gay, black man, aspired to live those roles to the fullest. He was not only a prominent member of New York's downtown scene as a composer, conductor, singer, pianist, and choreographer, but also performed at Lincoln Center with Pierre Boulez and the New York Philharmonic, and recorded experimental disco with producer Arthur Russell. 'Eastman is something of a cult figure among composers and singers', reads a 1980 press release.

Despite his prominence in the artistic and musical community in New York, Eastman died homeless and alone in a Buffalo, NY hospital, his death unreported until eight months later, in a *Village Voice* obituary by Kyle Gann. He left behind few scores and recordings, and his music lay dormant for decades until a three-CD set of his compositions 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, the publication of *Gay Guerrilla*, a comprehensive volume of biographical essays and analysis, 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*.

**Sarah Hennies** (b. 1979, Louisville, KY) is a composer based in Ithaca, NY 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 solo and 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 (NYC), Bent Duo (NYC), Cristian Alvear (Santiago), Claire Chase (NYC), R. Andrew Lee (Denver), LIMINAR (Mexico City), The Living Earth Show (San Francisco), The Thin Edge New Music Collective (Toronto), Two-Way Street (Knoxville), and Yarn/Wire (NYC). In late 2017 she premiered the groundbreaking work, *Contralto* at Issue Project Room (NYC), a film exploring transfeminine identity that uses aspects of "voice feminization" therapy as artistic material. The piece features a cast of transgender women accompanied by a dense and varied live score for string quartet and three percussionists. The work received widespread acclaim and has since been performed and screened all over the world at a variety of venues and festivals including Bent Frequency (Atlanta), La Sobilla (Verona), Monday Evening Concerts (Los Angeles), MOCA Tucson, Time-Based Art (Portland, OR), and the Toronto International Film Festival's Bell Lightbox Theatre. Her work has been supported by the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, New Music USA, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Community Arts Partnership of Tompkins County, and in 2016 she was awarded a fellowship in music/sound from the New York Foundation for the Arts.

Hennies is currently a member of improvised music group Meridian with Greg Stuart and Tim Feeney, a duo with sound/performance artist Jason Zeh, and the Queer Percussion Research Group with Jerry Pergolesi, Bill Solomon, and [Jennifer Torrence](#).

In 2013, Hennies founded the record label Weighter Recordings, releasing works by artists working at the fringes of contemporary music including Prune Bécheau, Thomas Bonvalet, Morgan Evans-Weiler, Tim Feeney, Jean-Luc Guionnet, Enrico Malatesta, and Matt Sargent.

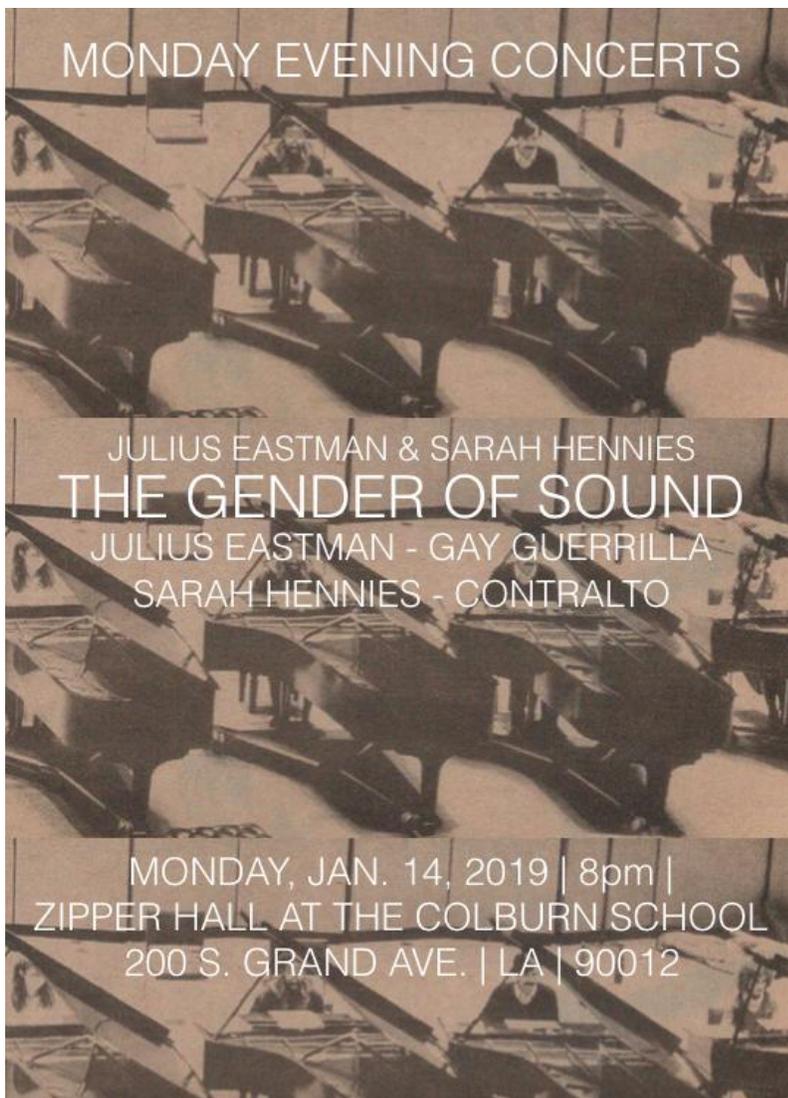
**Todd Moellenberg** is a pianist and performance artist based in Los Angeles. As a pianist, Todd champions the work of the queer avant-garde, including composers Jean Barraqué, Dominique Troncin, and Claude Vivier, and has been heralded by the *Los Angeles Times* for his "striking virtuosity and theatricality." Todd's creative work encompasses durational performance, public intervention, and poetry, and has been featured by LA Metro Arts, Shoot the Lobster, Space Time Art, Bijou Gallery, and Parkeology. He is currently a Teaching Artist with the Young Musician's Foundation as he completes his dissertation in contemporary piano performance at UC San Diego.

**Brendan Nguyen** displays uncommon versatility as a performer, artist, and thinker. His bold programming style and extravagantly produced concert concepts aim to explore new musical territory while casting a contemporary eye on the established canon. Brendan has performed at venues across North America and Europe and has recorded with Carrier and Populist Records.

Brendan's work in contemporary music has led to a number of premieres and commissions, including works by Wojtek Blecharz, Aaron Helgeson, Nicholas Deyoe, Clint McCallum, Beat Furrer, and Pulitzer Prize winner Roger Reynolds. He has also worked with composers George Crumb, Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Lewis Nielson, and has performed with violinist David Bowlin, pianist Aleck Karis, and percussionist Steven Schick. Brendan is a graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and UC San Diego.

**Adam Tendler** has played the piano since the age of 6, but still sometimes can't believe the piano is a thing - like, this big machine that makes a very particular sound that people take quite seriously, as if that sound is important and essential, eternal, timeless and primordial, like wind, waves, or volcano fire. But really it's an accumulation of taste and preference, the sound of a piano, and a rather modern invention, right? So he thinks about that a lot. He also often can't believe he plays the piano, particularly before a concert, and sometimes gets lost in the thought that Bach and Brahms and so many other composers never once heard the sound of, say, an airplane.

With a focus on contemporary keyboard performance, including organ and harpsichord, Grammy-nominated pianist **Richard Valitutto** is a 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 "vivid soloist," "vigorously virtuosic," "quietly dazzling," and "all around go-to new music specialist" (*LA Times*), he is a member of the critically acclaimed *wild Up* Modern Music Collective and the "startlingly versatile" (*NY Times*) quartet, gnarwhallaby. He regularly performs modern and contemporary art song with various singers and concert series and is one half of a composed-improvisation duo with saxophonist, musicologist, and composer Dave Wilson. Richard is a Sage Fellow in Cornell University's Keyboard Studies DMA program. 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*).  
[www.richardvalitutto.net](http://www.richardvalitutto.net)



MONDAY EVENING CONCERTS

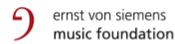
JULIUS EASTMAN & SARAH HENNIES  
THE GENDER OF SOUND  
JULIUS EASTMAN - GAY GUERRILLA  
SARAH HENNIES - CONTRALTO

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