

THE KITCHEN

CENTER FOR
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AND DANCE

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Julius Eastman

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Performed at the Kitchen Center recently in a version for two pianos, Julius Eastman's engaging new piece, 'Crazy Nigger', is intended for any homogeneous ensemble. The piece begins with the repetition of one note, which is soon joined by another. The performers are free to shift registers at will. As more notes enter, the performers may choose from among various versions of the basic material, creating a simultaneous set of variations. The new notes enter in thirds, giving the ever shifting tonal planes the hint of a jazz flavor. When a motif and all its variations exhausts itself, the whole process starts over, renewing itself, so to speak, with more material. Eastman's timing is impeccable, the piece's hour long duration easily sustained our interest because of the richness of the piano textures and the exhilarating pulse, which was always subject to shifts of emphasis. One section of the piece involved pulses of various speeds overlaid to form complex rhythmic patterns reminiscent of, perhaps, African drumming. The finale of the piece, which involved more than a dozen additional people, was a huge overtone series, the first harmonic being struck once each cycle, the second harmonic twice, the third harmonic three times, etc., form a rhythmic overtone series which articulated the tonal one. Since each person played a single note, the sound embodied a tremendous amount of energy which must be experienced.

Joseph Kubera and the composer turned in sensitive and clearly delineated performances of this demanding piece. •

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