

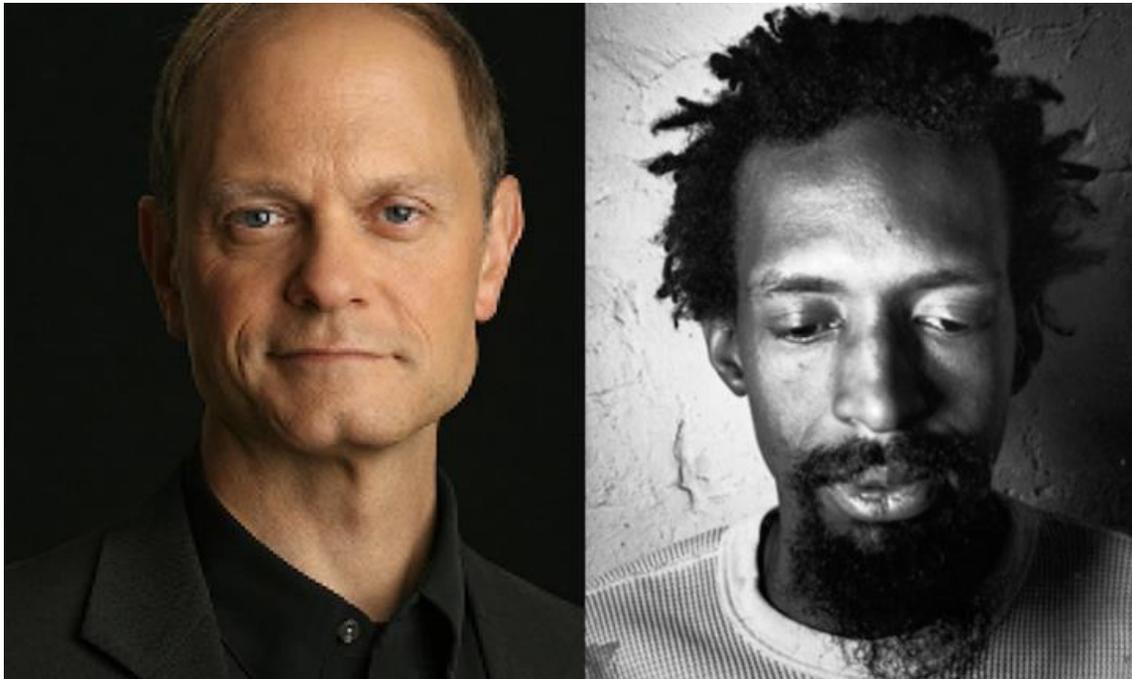
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For immediate release

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## June 28: To Celebrate Pride Day & Month, OSL Premieres Free Stream of *Feminine* by Late Queer Black Musical Pioneer Julius Eastman



*David Hyde Pierce and Julius Eastman (photos: courtesy of OSL)*

***“One of the most versatile and galvanic ensembles in the U.S.” – WQXR on OSL***

(May 2022)—To mark **Pride Month** and **Pride Day**, the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots on **June 28**, [Orchestra of St. Luke’s \(OSL\)](#) premieres a **free streamed performance** of *Feminine* (1974), a mesmerizing, improvisatory tour de force by **Julius Eastman**, the late queer Black composer “now experiencing a dizzying posthumous renaissance” (*New Yorker*). Featuring the virtuosos of **St. Luke’s Chamber Ensemble** and Tony- and Emmy-winning host **David Hyde Pierce** under the direction of award-winning filmmaker **Tristan Cook**, this virtual account of Eastman’s unjustly neglected minimalist masterpiece concludes the second season of OSL’s innovative “Sounds & Stories” series, which Sandy Kenyon of *ABC News* considers “**almost better**

**than having a front row seat at a live show.”** After its premiere on June 28, the stream **will be available, free, for a year.**

One of the few African Americans to break into the overwhelmingly white, Eurocentric world of late-20th-century classical music, **Julius Eastman** (1940–90) was a true original. A graduate of Philadelphia’s Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied under piano legend Horowitz, Eastman went on to win a Grammy nomination, teach at the University of Buffalo and collaborate with such leading lights of the avant-garde and experimental scenes as Boulez, Cage and Meredith Monk. Among the first to infuse minimalism with pop elements and jazz-informed improvisation, he was a visionary and pioneering composer whose works premiered at such prestigious venues as Brooklyn Academy of Music. Yet many doors remained closed to him.

A self-described “gay guerrilla” who strove to be **“Black to the fullest, a musician to the fullest, [and] a homosexual to the fullest,”** when it came to sexuality and gender, Eastman was far ahead of his time. Already performing in a dress and taking a creative approach to pronouns back in the 1970s, he was, **“long before words like ‘genderqueer’ and ‘nonbinary’ entered common usage, ... modeling his own kind of gender fluidity”** (NPR). Such courageous nonconformity exacerbated the prejudice he encountered, and the frustrations and downward spiral that ensued. Eastman died young and in complete obscurity after battling addiction, homelessness and AIDS. Many of his scores had been impounded during an eviction, and many more have since been lost. Only in recent years, with help from the friends and colleagues who survived him, has the painstaking work of rediscovering and reconstructing his catalogue begun.

This revival is long past due. As *Vogue* puts it:

“As the renaissance of Eastman scholarship grows year after year, the overdue celebration confirms not only the value of his contributions as a queer, Black composer, but the power of the music itself to redress decades of public disregard with the sounds of sheer joy, anger, and sensuality.”

A centerpiece of his output is the ensemble piece *Feminine* (1974), which represents one half of a diptych whose counterpart, *Masculine*, has never been found. Combining pulsing minimalism with improvisation, and leaving many decisions – even the exact instrumentation – to the performers themselves, *Feminine* is **“a mesmerizing 67-minute groove that unfolds one beautiful moment after another”** (NPR). **“Meditative, kaleidoscopic [and] eventually ecstatic”** (*New York Times*), the piece marks **“a major landmark in both Eastman’s posthumous narrative and the story of the American avant-garde”** (*Pitchfork*). In short, the long-neglected work is fast becoming a **“modern classic”** (*New Yorker*).

For its upcoming performance, OSL is using the arrangement of *Feminine* by **Christopher McIntyre**, who has “played a signal role in the much-heralded recent rediscovery ... of works by Julius Eastman” (*New Yorker*). Scored for violin, viola, bass, percussion, piano, synthesizer, alto saxophone and bassoon, this will feature McIntyre himself on synthesizer alongside the superlative musicians of **St. Luke’s Chamber Ensemble**, OSL’s artistic core. As a special gift to the online community to celebrate this year’s **Pride Month** and **Pride Day**, their account of the

work will stream at [OSLmusic.org](https://OSLmusic.org), **free of charge**, from OSL's **DiMenna Center for Classical Music**, New York's leading venue for streaming digital performance. After premiering at **6:30pm** on **June 28**, the **53rd anniversary** of the **Stonewall Riots**, the video will subsequently be available for **on-demand streaming for a year**. Like all concerts in the "Sounds & Stories" series, it will be hosted by OSL board member, Tony-winner and four-time Emmy-winner **David Hyde Pierce** and artistically filmed with multiple cameras, to capture the musicians from a variety of intimate perspectives, by director **Tristan Cook**, whose distinguished filmography includes a recent episode of *Live From Lincoln Center* and the award-nominated music documentary *Strangers on the Earth*. Sound is by OSL's longtime audio partner, **Audiosmith Digital Solutions**, with lighting design by **Abby Hocke-Brady**.

Conceived during the pandemic expressly for the online experience, "Sounds & Stories" is one of the ways OSL has "**responded robustly and creatively to the constraints of streamed performance**" (*New York Times*). Leading the New York City field in terms of innovation, frequency and production values, through its imaginative suite of streaming series, OSL has successfully taken the opportunity to "**grow its audience online - and make it more diverse in the process**" (*ABC News*).

Marking the final installment of "Sounds and Stories," *Feminine* demonstrates OSL's continued commitment to creators from traditionally underrepresented communities. Through its acclaimed "**Music in Color**" initiative, the orchestra has showcased the work of **Valerie Coleman**, *Performance Today's* 2020 Classical Woman of the Year, by commissioning and premiering *Fanfare for Uncommon Times* at Caramoor; reprising the new orchestral work for "Sounds and Stories"; giving a streamed account of *Portraits of Josephine*, her musical memoir of Josephine Baker; and producing *The Musical Storytelling of Valerie Coleman*, a virtual Free School Concert that reached more than 11,000 grade-school students nationwide. Launched in 2017 with major support from **National Endowment for the Arts**, "Music in Color" has also celebrated the life and works of **Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-George** (1745–99), **Florence Price** (1887–1953) and living composers **Eleanor Alberga** and **Gabriela Lena Frank**.

The streamed performance of *Feminine* also crowns OSL's truly stellar 2021-22 season, highlighted by no fewer than seven appearances at Carnegie Hall, where their account of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* was hailed as "**a luminous rarity: a baroque behemoth performed by a big ensemble with delicacy, lightness, and paschal fervor**," and led by Principal Conductor Bernard Labadie "**with a mastery worthy of DeMille**" (*New York*).

## About Orchestra of St. Luke's

**Orchestra of St. Luke's (OSL)** grew from a group of virtuoso musicians performing chamber music concerts at Greenwich Village's Church of St. Luke in the Fields in 1974. Regular seasons see OSL perform in diverse musical genres at New York's major concert venues, drawing on an expanded roster for large-scale works, and collaborating with artists ranging from Joshua Bell and Renée Fleming to Bono and Metallica. The orchestra has commissioned more than 50 new works and has given more than 175 world, U.S., and New York City premieres, as well as participating in 118 recordings, four of which have been recognized with Grammy Awards.

Internationally celebrated for his expertise in 18th-century music, **Bernard Labadie** was appointed as OSL's Principal Conductor in 2018, continuing the orchestra's long tradition of working with proponents of historical performance practice. Built and operated by OSL, the **DiMenna Center for Classical Music** opened in 2011. New York City's only rehearsal, recording, education and performance space expressly dedicated to classical music, it serves more than 500 ensembles and 30,000 musicians each year.

To download high-resolution photos, click [here](#).

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## OSL presents Julius Eastman's *Feminine*

June 28 at 6:30pm

Premiere of free stream at [OSLmusic.org](https://OSLmusic.org), where it will subsequently be available on demand

"Sounds & Stories" series

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble

Conrad Harris, violin

Dana Kelley, viola

John Feeney, double bass

Lino Gomez, alto saxophone

William Hestand, bassoon

Maya Gunji, percussion

Margaret Kampmeier, piano

Christopher McIntyre, synthesizer

David Hyde Pierce, host

Tristan Cook, filmmaker

EASTMAN, arr. C. McIntyre: *Feminine*

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