

A black and white photograph of two hands, one palm up and one palm down, with the word 'WORK' overlaid in large pink letters. The hands are positioned in the center of the frame, with the fingers spread. The background is a blurred, light-colored surface. The word 'WORK' is written in a bold, sans-serif font, with the letters 'W', 'O', 'R', and 'K' being significantly larger than the letter 'O'. The pink color of the text contrasts sharply with the black and white background.

**WORK**



5. RED FLAG PRELUDE

Tempo rubato

*p legato*



Tempo molto rubato  
start very quickly, get slower and more legato with each gesture...

13

Sax *motor off secco*

Vib. *p*

Vln. *clb.*

Vc. *clb.* *p* *p<sup>3</sup>*

Cb. *p* *p<sup>3</sup>*



*The conception of 'work' is most often connected to employment—work that is done for compensation, work that is done for a boss, work that can be **exploited**. Often, however, the work that is most meaningful to us is unpaid and not connected to employment: raising children, caring for older parents, volunteering, making art. This type of work is often the most stressful, most intensive, and most fulfilling labor we engage in. It also, more often than not, happens within the context of relationships. As contemporary labor is increasingly competitive and ever more isolated, this other type of work becomes more important for our societal and mental health. For me, this is the **work** that Wooden Cities lets me do.*

Intention has been the singular and foremost interest in making **WORK**. Intention has been the central focus of Wooden Cities and the music I make with it since the beginning. Sincere intent feels nearly impossible to measure, and trying to quantify or qualify it makes it seem that much more evasive; but that doesn't mean it's not **worth** mentioning. I can't express to the person experiencing this collection of art how deeply this group searches for the meaning or intention portrayed by the composers' words and notation, and many many times, a lack thereof. At the same time, I have never seen a group of people so tirelessly committed to

becoming **themselves**—together—through making art.

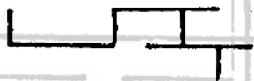
I joined Wooden Cities a few years into its existence. One of the first people I met when I moved to **Buffalo** was Brendan Fitzgerald. I knew he directed a new music ensemble, and I wanted to get involved. Right away it was obvious that this was a special kind of ensemble. There was no pretense, no posturing. High-brow and low-brow didn't mean a thing. Improvisations were filled with tongue-in-cheek self-referential jokes. It felt like a family. *It's more a family than a group. Performing with Wooden Cities is always exciting and challenging, but it's truly the people that make this ensemble what it is.* This collection of players has come to develop almost an entire **micro-culture** within it which allows it to dig and till and toil to find an intention within the music that soundly represents a group intention.

In tons of ways, Wooden Cities is Buffalo to me. It's a powerhouse group of people in an unassuming package. It's self-deprecating and doesn't take itself too seriously. It encapsulates the perpetual crossing of genres that's so particular and beautiful about Buffalo's music scene. It's improvisatory and **experimental** in a way that's inviting rather than exclusionary.

*When I hear the phrase "Wooden Cities,"*

*this very literal image pops into my head: little toy soldiers (wooden people) marching around a city with many tall wooden skyscraper-looking buildings, wooden cars and wooden trolleys **roaming** the streets, all moving around like a stop motion movie.*

The way I see it, Wooden Cities picks up where the Creative Associates left off. It's a passion project that takes up the same interests and approaches. It's an ensemble that allows Buffalo composers to get their work performed, a research group for the development of ideas, an envoy to the people of Buffalo from the land of **weird** sounds.



*As someone who detests work of all kinds, **transferring** this music to a tangible medium was far more work than originally thought. Surely, there are others in the ensemble who view work the same way I do, and also see **WORK** as an escape from work. For you see, at work there are wankers; in **WORK**, there are wonkers. If it weren't for the Wooden*

*Cities' work works, **WORK** would never **wake** from its winks.*

### **Red Flag Prelude**

"Red Flag" is a poem by Jim Cornell and was inspired by the death of a Welsh miner caused by the government forces at the beginning of [the twentieth] century. The bloody **shirt** of the victim was waved as a flag by the angry activist miners. In 1926 (the year of the general strike in England), this poem, sung to the music of the Christmas carol, "O Tannenbaum," had become the song of the English working class in its struggle against capitalism. In this Prelude, the emphasis is on the **commemoration** of the martyrs of the working class.

—Cornelius Cardew (1936-1981)

I first arranged the piece for a Thanksgiving-themed concert in 2017, which seemed appropriate because for me it is a piece about gratitude. It's a humble, musical thank-you to the leaders and **foot-soldiers** of the early-20th-century labor movement. Those women and men (most of their names lost to history) put their bodies on the line to make work safer and less exploitative. Despite the many setbacks of the last few decades, we are still reaping the benefits of their **struggle**, and their example offers a reminder of the continued necessity of the fight for fairness and workplace democracy.

## The Price of Oil

The immediate impetus for [this] composition was provided by [the] disaster which in the spring of 1980 overtook several hundred people who were living on the "Alexander Kielland," a **floating** platform off the coast of Norway, used to house the workers employed in oil-drilling operations in that part of the North Sea. [...] I used] a text which I had clipped from a newspaper [...]: an anonymous interview with a dealer in the Rotterdam spot market, who talks in colorful and candid terms about the oil business and its risks, from the entrepreneur's point of view. I immediately went to work and assembled, from newspaper accounts of the **survivors** of the North Sea disaster and from other documentary sources, a second character who functions as a counterpoint to the dealer.

Although the dealer and the worker never meet or **interact** directly, both of them together make up complementary parts of a superstructure which governs their individual behavior, and whose functioning in turn depends upon their active presence. Both of these characters are caught in a tragic **design** over which they have no control, manifesting itself on the one side as greed, and on the other as need.

The first part, in which the two texts are chanted, is accompanied by specifically-constructed instruments. [...] The second part

is entirely instrumental, now using more conventional means in a kind of formalized wordless **chorus** which comments on the preceding action, [developing] in contemporary musical language, some of the basic motifs of classical tragedy.

—Frederic Rzewski (b. 1938)

Part 1 of *The Price of Oil* consists of a giant hocket, in which a single musical line is divided between eight parts (realized on our recording by over a dozen players). I love the idea of these **individual** parts coming together to create a single unified whole.

*At the same time, the spoken dialogue highlights the tension and disparity of views between a worker and a dealer of oil. Coupled with the bifurcation of the ensemble, it becomes very easy to draw parallels between the (seemingly) perpetual struggles of the **labor** market. The piece becomes extremely aggressive, with the mechanical sounds of the ensemble hocketing furiously and gradually dissolving, culminating in "The Almighty Explosion."*

Ultimately, unity and division coexist here. The laborers in the piece's narrative were working together to drill for oil, and then to save one another from the disaster itself, and, in our own small way, that's what we have to do as an ensemble to realize the piece. It seems a fitting example of the way that music can imitate life, while

simultaneously offering a vision of the **solidarity** needed to accomplish change. From the time this piece was written, we have continued to see the disastrous effects of oil exploration, and it's almost as if Rzewski is asking us "at what point will we end this dangerous and destructive process?"

*The Price of Oil* score and texts available at [www.woodencities.org/priceofoil](http://www.woodencities.org/priceofoil)

*When WORK becomes work, the tendency is to fall out of love with WORK. However, the benefits of WORK far outweigh those of work. When **work** work transforms WORK into a work of art, suddenly work doesn't seem all that bad.*

### **Stay On It**

Com'on now baby, stay **on** it.  
Change this thread on which we move  
from invisible to hardly tangible.

With you movin and groovin on it,  
making me feel fine as wine,  
I don't have to find the MEANING,  
because you will have filled in his most **invisible**  
and intangible Majesty's place;  
But only if you stay on it. You Dig  
Although his majesty does stay with it,  
he can't **stay** on it. (Does that move you?)

Ties that move and break,  
disappear, and return again, are not ties that stay  
on it.

They are sometimy bonds. These bonds cause  
**screens** like the Edge of Night, with  
Ivory snow liquid to appear.

This is why baby cakes, I'm ringin you up  
in order to relay this song message  
so that you can get the feelin

O sweet boy

Because without the movin and the groovin,  
the **carin** and the sharin,  
the reelin and the feelin,

I mean really.

—Julius Eastman (1940-1990)

Julius Eastman's *Stay On It* has been cited by Kyle Gann as one of the first minimalist works to show the influence of pop music. Performed extensively by Eastman with the UB Creative Associates across Europe in the 1970s, the piece was never fully scored and was, for a period, lost. Relying on a transcription by composer/performer Paul Pinto, multiple source recordings of Eastman's performances, and conversations with Creative Associate/percussionist Jan Williams, we created a reconstruction of the work which emphasizes the elements of improvisation and ensemble interaction which were integral to the original composition.

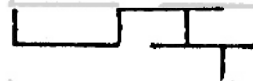
While cellist David Gibson once stated that *Stay On It* "doesn't exist without Julius," we are doing our best to contribute to the revival of the spirit of the work.

*Stay On It* is a very special piece to me. It was the first piece I heard by Julius, and one that sent me on a long process of immersing myself in his music. What was so striking to me was how he rather effortlessly transitions from this extremely joyous, **relentless** riff, which descends into anarchy, and comes back, warmer and constantly changing. In the final moments of almost total chaos, this gorgeous chorale begins to evolve, almost from behind the clouds. It too goes through this process of expansion and dissolution, leaving us with a single tambourine at the end, like a **skipping** record player.

*Learning, adapting, and realizing Stay On It was more about learning a method than learning notes/rhythms. Eastman creates an intriguing way for musicians to communicate with one another in the **midst** of a piece of music—the musicians have the freedom to make decisions about where to take the music, and they use music itself to communicate those decisions. It's at once very elegant and intuitive and yet deceptively difficult. That this method is contextualized in a fun, exuberant, dance-y atmosphere seems essential—it emphasizes the joy, playfulness, and **exploratory** quality of*

*music-making.*

Each performance is strikingly different, and I think that's what has always drawn me to Julius' music. It's in a constant state of evolution, and where many contemporary pieces can feel dated, Julius' music has an **uncanny** ability to remain fresh and topical. The revival of this critical, and (until recently) overlooked, piece of Buffalo history is a tribute to Julius Eastman's powerful body of work, and to the unrecognized labor of a black gay man who had to work twice as hard to make it in racist, homophobic America and died decades before his **work** was properly honored.



*In my opinion, you cannot comprehend where you are going unless you understand where you come from. I played a very small part on this album, but my part is full of Buffalo's history. Both Rzewski and Eastman spent some of their impressionable years here, and both works deal with issues of their respective **time**. So in these ways I relate to these pieces and composers. To me being a part of this album means I am one*

*part of Buffalo's history and culture, and they are a part of me.*

I have the pleasure and privilege of struggling to make art with people I care about, of **building** and creating not for someone, but with others. It is something that has been incredibly satisfying, and for which I am very grateful. This record is a window into a moment of that struggle. It is a product of engagement, reflection, observation, **questioning**, action, and **WORK**.

*WORK can help a walk to work with wankers go by quickly, and if the WORK works work hard enough to make WORK work, the wankers **walking** to work work on talking to each other, allowing you to walk the walk to work with WORK. How fitting that the album is called WORK. **Wank.***

Evan Courtin  
Brendan Fitzgerald  
Ethan Hayden  
Megan Kyle  
John Smigielski  
Stephen Solook





**THE PRICE OF OIL: PART TWO**

BASIC ATTACK  
FIRST PERCUSSION ONLY, THEN OTHER INSTRUMENTS, SEVERAL TIMES

1.	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
2.	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
3.	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
4.	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
5.	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
6.	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
7.	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
8.	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
9.	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]



**THE PRICE OF OIL:**

**DEALER**

COME IN AT O'CLOCK

WINDS	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
RIGHT	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
PERC.	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
WORKER	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
WINDS	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
LEFT	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]
PERC.	[Musical notation]	[Musical notation]



## **Stay On It**

Megan Kyle, oboe  
Nelson Rivera\*, tenor saxophone  
Steve Baczkowski\*, baritone saxophone  
Dylan Gechoff, trombone  
Ethan Hayden, trombone & score realization  
Ian Kerr-Mace, euphonium  
Steve Lattimore, marimba  
Stephen Solook, marimba & tambourine  
John Smigielski, vibraphone  
Nicholas Emmanuel, Michael McNeill\*, pianos  
Rebecca Marin, voice  
Evan Courtin, violin  
T.J. Borden, Katie Weissman, cellos  
Brendan Fitzgerald, guitar & direction

\*soloist

## **Red Flag Prelude**

Nelson Rivera, tenor saxophone  
Stephen Lattimore, vibraphone  
Evan Courtin, violin  
Katie Weissman, cello  
Megan McDevitt, contrabass  
Brendan Fitzgerald, conductor

arranged for Wooden Cities by Ethan Hayden

## **The Price of Oil**

### *Introduction:*

Evan Courtin, Nicholas Emmanuel, Brendan  
Fitzgerald, Ethan Hayden, Megan Kyle, voices

### *Part 1:*

Evan Courtin, narrator  
Rebecca Marin, dealer  
Ethan Hayden, worker  
Steve Lattimore, John Smigielski, drums  
T.J. Borden, Dylan Gechoff, Ian Kerr-Mace, Megan  
Kyle, tooty-pipes (winds)  
Evan Courtin, Nicholas Emmanuel, Michael McNeill,  
Stephen Solook, Katie Weissman, whacky-pipes  
(percussion)

### *Part 2:*

Megan Kyle, oboe  
Dylan Gechoff, Ethan Hayden, trombones  
Ian Kerr-Mace, euphonium  
Stephen Solook, almglocken  
Steve Lattimore, John Smigielski, drums  
Nicholas Emmanuel, Michael McNeill, pianos  
Evan Courtin, violin  
T.J. Borden, Katie Weissman, cellos

Brendan Fitzgerald, instrument builder &  
conductor  
Ethan Hayden, score realization



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WOODEN CITIES

Cornelius Cardew  
*Red Flag Prelude* (1974)



Frederic Rzewski  
*The Price of Oil* (1980)

- introduction
- part 1
- part 2



Julius Eastman  
*Stay On It* (1973)

