

2018

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Recommended Citation

Evans, Jewel, "Black and Grey: An Audio-Visual Tribute to the Undefined" (2018). *Senior Projects Spring 2018*. 382.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2018/382

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Black and Grey: An Audio-Visual Tribute to the Undefined

A Senior Project submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of
Bard College

by
Jewel Evans

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2018

The Process:

My project was originally called Seven Stages of “Griffe.” The term “griffe” was a racial category describing people who are three quarters black and one quarter white, which is my actual genetic makeup. My original plan was to analyze the history of the term and reference it in seven songs representing the seven stages of grief, and create a long music video to open up dialogue about the racial definitions we ascribe ourselves to. The project changed when I reached an impasse in my historical research, given that the term was obsolete by the 18th century and had not been referenced at all since.

My research then began to lean toward mixed representation and identity in visual art, music, and film primarily in the U.S. to reference in my video that features interviews with Bard students about their struggles with mixed race identity.

The Project:

In “Black And Grey,” the music video and song I composed for my project, I put perceptions of Afro mixed race identity in juxtaposition with Bard students who have their own stories to tell about what it means to be Afro mixed race, in an ambitious attempt to turn outdated notions of identity on their heads.

Through the medium of music and film I hope to remind the viewer of the U.S. and Europe’s unpleasant past with Afro mixed race people, while alluding to unpleasant, pressing issues of today. These issues include the controversy around racial categories in the U.S. census, and the continued use of hypodescent, an arguably outdated method of racial categorization primarily associated with the “one drop rule,”- the idea that if a mixed person has any genetic/familial background with a minority group, they are automatically assigned to that minority group and cannot identify with the majority.

The Composition:

“Black and Grey” features a fusion of jazz, electronic, and classical influence, in an attempt to manifest mixed race identity in a multicultural sound. I feature the upright bass used in both classical and jazz music sonically code-switching between the two genres, using the classic bow at some points and plucking improvisational jazz at others; the sax maintaining jazz style; a psychedelic electric bass guitar; and a versatile piano and percussion performance that assumes the character of all three genres and then transcends them altogether.

Along with the instruments, I purposefully used classical singers and jazz singers to create a sonically mixed choir. Then, with the help of sound editing and recording multiple tracks, I gave the choir a ghostly quality to allude to a limbo state of racial/cultural ambiguity.

Acknowledgements/Special Thanks:

First and foremost, I would like to thank my board: James Bagwell my SPROJ advisor, Matt Sargent, Maria Sonevitsky (1st Semester), and Ephraim Asili.

My instrumentalists: Justin Geyer on piano, Ken Winfield on drums, Evan Dibbs on guitar, Paul Duhe on sax, and Max Pitman playing the upright bass

My vocalists: Rachael Gunning, Ella Okoli, Jonathan Mildner, and Victoria Haschke

My interviewees: Ken Winfield, Milan Miller, Mehgan Abdel-Moneim, Victoria Haschke, Thai Singer, Alina Augustin, Christopher Johnson, Ryan Jones, and Tim Trumpet, for being so open about their experiences.

Tom Mark who helped guide me in the process of recording and sound mixing and Aaron Turner for technical film advice.

Christian Crouch for providing me with much needed historical information that helped guide my research and find the heart of my project.

Andrew Carlson for being my rock throughout my four years of college. You are the best friend and confidant anyone could have, and I am so lucky to have you in my life.

Last but not least, my parents Vanessa Evans and Christopher Evans who have worked tirelessly for my well-being since the day I was born. I would not be at Bard College had it not been for you two. Respect, appreciation, and love to you both.

The Screening:

On May 14, 2018 at 7pm in Weis Cinema I will be screening my project and presenting it to my board: James Bagwell, my SPROJ advisor, Matt Sargent, and Ephraim Asili.

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I am

Jewel Evans

Voice

Piano

mf
red.

5

Vo.

Black And gre - y

Pno.

9

Vo. Black And gre - y

Pno.

13

Vo. That is what I a - - - m

Pno.

17

Vo. Black And gre

Pno.

21

Vo.

Pno.

ff

Red.

26

Vo. *Black And gre*

Pno. *mf*

30

Vo. *Black And gre - y*

Pno.

34

Vo.

Pno.

molto rit.

$\text{♩} = 65$

39

Vo.

Pno.

ff

rit.

47

Vo.

Pno.

pp

rit.

Black and Grey Lead

- Intro
 - 4 bars
 - B major chord then vii G # in the bass
- A Section (mp) (slow build)
 - 1st line
 - Bass on Bassline (w/bow)
 - Light cymbal enter at last bar
 - 2nd line
 - Cymbal splash
 - Pick up to normal speed
 - 3rd line
 - Drumbeat starts.
 - Continue Bass and cymbal
 - 4th line
 - Continue drums and bass
 - Piano picks up melody.
- A Section (mf)
 - 1st line
 - Continue drum beat and piano melody
 - Guitar takes baseline.
 - Bass cuts off
 - 2nd line
 - ^^Continued
 - 3rd line
 - ^^Continued
 - 4th line
 - Piano Starts off B Section
- B Section (f)
 - Line 1
 - Piano plays chords in b section
 - Strong Drums
 - Sax plays.
 - Line 2
 - Slow down at last two bars.
- A Section (mp)
 - Line 1
 - Sax melody (mf)
 - Piano plays melody
 - Bass takes back Bass

- Light Drum beat
 - Line 2
 - Piano ad lib
 - Line 3
 - Continue(mp)
 - Guitar plays chords (mf)
 - Continue
- A Section (mp)
 - Line 1
 - Piano improv
 - Light drums
 - Guitar carries bass
 - Bass can also take bass (slap bow)
 - Line 2
 - Continue
 - Line 3
 - Bass plays melody with bow
 - c.Light drums
 - c.Piano improv
 - Line 4
 - Continue All
 - Piano starts up the B section
- B Section (f)
 - Line 1
 - Piano plays chords in b section

Strong Drums

 - Sax plays.
 - Line 2
 - Slow down at last two bars.

Improvisational Circle of Sound repeat this process about 6 times and let it evolve as you listen to each other.

- A Section (mp) (start slow almost arrhythmic)
 - Line 1
 - Sax solo again (f)
 - Piano takes base with strings

- Bass takes bass as well (perhaps slaps bow on strings)
 - Light scratching/whatever if you see fit, Ken
 - Line 2
 - Continued
 - Line 3
 - Bass takes melody with bow
 - Guitar takes bass
 - Piano plays improvised with the chord progression. (no mute)
 - Line 4
 - Continued

Once you get to iteration number 6 be prepared to go into B section

- B Section (f)
 - Line 1
 - Piano plays chords in b section
 - Strong Drums
 - Sax plays.
 - Line 2
 - Be prepared for Modulated A
- Modulated A (f)
 - 2 Lines (8 bars)
 - Strong Drums
 - Piano strict to the composition but loud and spirited melody
 - Sax plays soprano/alto vocal part
- Modulated B section (sans Drums for the rest of song)
 - Line 1
 - Piano plays chords in b section
 - Sax plays.
 - Repeat line 1
- Modulated B again
 - Sax plays part of higher piano melody in line 1
- End
 - 1st Line 1st phrase Piano strings, Bass, and Sax all play the bass line of the first two measures of Section A in b minor
 - 2nd phrase Sax stops
 - 2nd Line 1st phrase Bass stops Piano slows down as it finishes on G doesn't get to A or B

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A

Piano

Bm G Bm G

6

Pno.

Bm G Bm G

10

Pno.

Bm G Bm G

14

Pno.

Bm G Bm G

19 **B**

Pno.

F⁷/G B^b Gm⁹ Eb⁶ D(sus4) (Gmaj7/D)