

Concerts at the Point
presents ...

FLY THE COOP

Bach Sonatas and Preludes

Emi Ferguson & RUCKUS

MARCH 3, 2024, 3:00 PM

WESTPORT POINT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1912 MAIN ROAD, WESTPORT POINT, MA

THE IMAGE ON TODAY'S COVER is "Lady Kingfisher," a work by artist Galen Snow.

Originally from Seattle, Galen finds being outdoors key to her happiness, thus the reason for settling in Little Compton more than forty years ago.

People often ask her how long she has been an artist. She will answer, "Forever," because she's always been one on the inside. Painting with paper, or paper montage, has been her focus for ten years. It all begins with a subject, then she lets herself go, and the creative process takes over.

Galen says, "I find peace in the beauty of the day, in the moment and the inner energy that keeps me inspired and moving forward in my craft."

**THIS CONCERT IS UNDERWRITTEN IN PART BY A GRANT
FROM THE GRIMSHAW-GUDEWICZ CHARITABLE
FOUNDATION.**

Concerts at the Point

SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 2024

FLY THE COOP BACH SONATAS AND PRELUDES

Emi Ferguson and RUCKUS

What if you took Bach out of the museum and infused it with equal parts tradition, funk, whimsy, and fun?

MUSICIANS

Emi Ferguson, baroque flute

RUCKUS

Clay Zeller Townson, baroque bassoon

Coleman Itzkoff, baroque cello

Doug Balliett, baroque bass

Paul Holmes Morton, baroque guitar

Adam Cockerham, theorbo and baroque guitar

Elliot Figg, harpsichord, organ

These works were not created equally. They represent three distinct stages in J.S. Bach's life, and each inhabits its own stylistic world.

We've responded accordingly.

All works by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), realized and reimagined by Emi Ferguson and RUCKUS.

PROGRAM

The Craftsman, BWV 1034 (ca. 1724)

Prelude in G Major, after BWV 884

Sonata in E Minor, BWV 1034

Adagio ma non troppo

Allegro

Prelude in E Minor, after BWV 855

Sonata in E Minor, BWV 1034

Andante

Allegro

The Teacher and the Student, BWV 1033 (ca.1717/1731)

Prelude in C minor, after BWV 847

Aria, from the Goldberg Variations, BWV 988

Sonata in C Major, BWV 1033

Andante - Presto

Allegro

Prelude in C Minor, after BWV 999

Sonata in C Major, BWV 1033

Adagio

Minuet 1 & 2

----- *intermission* -----

The Unpredictable

Selections to be announced from the stage

The Eccentric, BWV 1035 (ca. 1741)

Trio Sonata in G Major, BWV 1039

Adagio

Sonata in E Major, BWV 1035

Adagio ma non tanto

Allegro

Siciliano

Allegro assai

Prelude in E Major, after BWV 815a

*For more information, and to purchase or stream the album,
please visit flythecoopbach.com*

PROGRAM NOTES

The transverse flute underwent a major redevelopment in the 1680s, thanks to musicians in the court of Louis XIV. While it became hugely popular in French aristocratic circles due to its sweet and pleasant tone and the ability to play both soft and loud dynamics, it took several decades for the instrument to develop widespread use across Europe. Bach was well into his thirties before he was introduced to the flute by the visiting French flute virtuoso Pierre-Gabriel Buffardin. This meeting is widely believed to have inspired Bach's first composition featuring the flute, his *Brandenburg Concerto no.5* (perhaps intended for Bach and Buffardin to play together), followed shortly thereafter by his *Partita* for unaccompanied flute. While most of Bach's secular instrumental chamber music was written between 1717-1723 during his time in Cöthen, he wrote six* sonatas for the flute over the course of his adult life in Leipzig in addition to featuring the instrument in other chamber music works and many sacred cantatas.

Bach's three flute and continuo sonatas, BWV 1033, 1034, and 1035, distill his most wonderful musical qualities down to just a two-line texture: treble (flute) and bass. While the flute part is obbligato (the composer writes out all the notes to be performed), the bass part is a continuo line, an open-ended accompaniment part used in 17th- and 18th-century music consisting of a bass line melody along with numbers that indicate chords, similar to the chord changes that jazz musicians use, thereby allowing performers to contribute unique improvised performances.

Many composers, including Bach, understood that a composition was not complete until the performers had added their own interpretations to the piece. The use of continuo in a composition is an open-ended invitation from composers that allows ensembles the freedom to orchestrate, to shrink and grow from one person (most often keyboard or cello or guitar)

to large groups of a variety of bass instruments like RUCKUS. The epic forces of RUCKUS – baroque bassoon, cello, viola da gamba, theorbos, baroque guitars, baroque bass, harpsichord, and organ – give a wonderful array of possibilities that allow us to explode Bach’s bass line into a rainbow of colors.

Each of the three sonatas and the accompanying preludes (arranged by Emi and RUCKUS) inhabits its own artistic world and, together, they represent three distinct stages and aspects of J.S. Bach’s life.

*The exact number of sonatas Bach wrote for the flute is hotly contested, with many scholars disagreeing on the authenticity of BWV 1020, 1031, and 1033. While we may never know how many sonatas he wrote for the instrument, what we can agree upon is that hearing the instrument for the first time around 1720 inspired Bach to write secular chamber music for the flute for the rest of his life.



THE CRAFTSMAN: Bach’s E Minor Sonata, BWV 1034, written in 1724, is musical architecture at its most grand. Possibly written during his early Leipzig years (during which he also composed over sixty cantatas) this sonata has the weight of his larger musical sermons, and its technical sophistication shows the hand of a seasoned craftsman. The first movement, *Adagio ma non troppo*, features a constant push and pull between the treble and bass, reminiscent of Sisyphus and the rock, that unfolds into a tour de force *Allegro* of the second movement that features running 16th notes that do not let up until the ecstasy of the third movement arrives. This *Andante* is one of Bach’s most sublime, simple, and beautiful movements, and the perfect respite from the intensity of the other three movements of the sonata – a welcome break before the roar of the fourth movement *Allegro* that features all of RUCKUS at their most intense.

THE ECCENTRIC: At the other end of the timeline, written in 1741, is the E Major Sonata, BWV 1035. It is sensual, simple in

form, and perfumed with luxurious harmony. There's a *galant* breeziness throughout, yet the harmonic twists and melodic interplay between flute and bass reveal Bach's love for thorny, contrapuntal music. A delicate *Adagio ma non troppo*, the yin to the yang of the BWV 1034 movement of the same name, is followed by a bawdy *Allegro*. The third movement *Siciliano* features Bach's original melodic interplay between flute and cello/bassoon with a newly added bass line, unique to *Fly the Coop*, providing a rhythmic groove alongside dueling baroque guitars and fantastical harpsichord – a true Baroque rhythm section that takes the listener to an exotic land of unusual sights and sounds. This raucous nighttime music is followed by the morning light haze of the fourth movement *Allegro assai* that brings the sonata to a gentle conclusion.

THE TEACHER: Falling somewhere in between the poles of the E Minor and E Major sonatas is the slightly more anachronistic C Major Sonata, BWV 1033. Open-hearted, inviting, full of grace and generosity, this sonata features an unusually simple continuo line that may have been composed by a young C.P.E. Bach as part of his studies (possibly 1731) in response to an existing solo flute work by his father (possibly 1721). This collaborative compositional process invited us to join the Bach family fun. Using C.P.E.'s baseline as a springboard, we interwove other music by Bach, rewrote bass lines, and added newly composed material. The opening *Andante* is full of warm, almost romantic chord progressions that unfold into a *Presto* featuring a single pedal bass note with the flute dancing merrily above. The second movement of the C Major sonata bears uncanny similarities to the sixth variation from Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, and so we felt that a mashup-of the two would show (in addition to our keyboard prelude arrangements) how Bach used material and instruments interchangeably and repeatedly throughout his career.

We start our mash-up with the A section of the flute sonata, transitioning to the *Goldberg* sixth variation at the beginning of

the B section, then returning to the flute sonata for the final B to round things out and get us back home to C Major. A newly composed bass line, based on the octave-jumping left hand of the Goldberg sixth variation, accompanies the flute throughout, with CPE Bach's original bass line now found several octaves higher in the baroque guitar – a playful homage. The third movement, *Adagio*, is a true aria in A minor, with the flute soaring above an intense and powerful bass line that mines the depths of the instruments on hand. Ending things are two spirited and joyful *Menuetts*. The first a more traditional dance, with the second borrowing its accent from French dances.

These sonatas are often introduced to flute players at a young age and, while they are beloved standards in the repertoire, they continue to challenge and inspire with their capacity for individual interpretation. The way that we share them today is by no means the only way to play these pieces. It is our unique take on them, but we think our interpretation shows and augments all the characters and colors that these sonatas are naturally imbued with, turning them into true ensemble pieces.

The album, *Fly the Coop: Bach Sonatas and Preludes*, was recorded in idyllic southern Vermont, where we convened to live, work, rehearse, and record together in July of 2018. All of the instruments and techniques used in today's performance are learned from historical treatises and practices, yet we are distinctly aware of the fact that we are influenced by the centuries between our time and Bach's. It was natural for some of these influences to sneak into our interpretations of these sonatas, in the same way that Bach himself was influenced by the music of his own time. It is our attempt to take this music out of the museum and breathe life into it from a historically informed, personal and contemporary perspective.

Peppered throughout the program are our arrangements of iconic and obscure keyboard works by Bach. Movements from the *Well-Tempered Klavier*, addenda from his *French Suites*, and

early drafts of pieces found in the Anna Magdalena and Wilhelm Friedrich notebooks are all featured. Bach's love of family and friends is evident in his writing, and our arrangements of these keyboard works are our love letter and homage to the sense of community imbued in his writing and work.

Written by Emi Ferguson and Clay Zeller-Townson



Emi Ferguson

A 2023 recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, Emi Ferguson can be heard live in concerts and festivals with groups including AMOC, RUCKUS, the Handel and Haydn Society, the New York New Music Ensemble, the Manhattan Chamber Players, and as the music director of Camerata Pacifica Baroque. Her recordings celebrate her fascination with reinvigorating music and instruments of the past for the present. Her 2019 album *Fly the Coop: Bach Sonatas and Preludes*, a collaboration with continuo band RUCKUS, debuted at #1 on the iTunes classical charts and #2 on the Billboard classical charts, and was called

"blindingly impressive ... a fizzing, daring display of personality and imagination" by the *New York Times*.

Emi has been a featured performer at the Marlboro, Lucerne, Ojai, Lake Champlain, Bach Virtuosi, and June in Buffalo festivals, often premiering new works by composers of our time. Emi has spoken and performed at several TEDx events and has been featured on media outlets including the Discovery Channel, Amazon Prime, WQXR, and Vox talking about how music relates to our world today. As part of WQXR's Artist Propulsion Lab, she created the series "This Composer is SICK!" with Max Fine, that explored the impact of syphilis on composers Franz Schubert, Bedřich Smetana, and Scott Joplin. She has also guest hosted WQXR's Young Artists Showcase. Her book, "Iconic Composers," co-written with Nicholas and David Csicsko, was released in June 2023, introducing music lovers of all ages to fifty incredible composers. Born in Japan and raised in London and Boston, she now resides in New York City. More at: emiferguson.com

RUCKUS

RUCKUS is a baroque band with a fresh, visceral approach to early music. The ensemble's debut earned widespread critical acclaim: "achingly delicate one moment, incisive and punchy the next" (*New York Times*), "superb" (*Opera News*). RUCKUS's core members form a continuo group, the baroque equivalent of a jazz rhythm section: guitars, keyboards, cello, bassoon, and bass. The ensemble aims to fuse the early-music movement's questing, creative spirit with the grit, groove and jangle of American roots music, creating a unique sound of "rough-edged intensity" (*New Yorker*). Its members are among the most creative and virtuosic performers in North American early music. RUCKUS is based in New York City.

RUCKUS's first album, an acclaimed collaboration with Emi Ferguson of Bach Sonatas and Preludes, debuted at #2 on the Billboard Charts. Current programs in development include:

Holy Manna, a participatory concert experience through Shape-Note music; *Arcadian Visions*, a recital featuring Emi Ferguson and Rachell Ellen Wong; and Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre Sonatas with violinist Keir GoGwilt. Additionally, RUCKUS is co-commissioning a large scale work from NEA Jazz Master Roscoe Mitchell, for RUCKUS, Emi Ferguson and the Immanuel Wilkins (Jazz) Quartet. Website: ruckusearlymusic.org

Clay Zeller-Townson (baroque bassoon): Founder of RUCKUS. Plays with the leading period instrument ensembles in North America, including Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Boston Baroque, Trinity Baroque Orchestra, American Bach Soloists, and Musica Angelica. Masterclasses at Eastman School of Music, UCLA, and University of Missouri.

Coleman Itzkoff (baroque cello): Prize winner at the 2019 Houston Symphony's Ima Hogg Competition. Founding member of AMOC (American Modern Opera Company) and with this ensemble has begun pushing into the areas of dancing and acting. Degrees from Rice University and USC, and currently enrolled in Juilliard's prestigious Artist Diploma program, studying with Timothy Eddy, Richard Aaron, and baroque cello with Phoebe Carrai.

Paul Holmes Morton (theorbo/baroque guitar/banjo): Member of RUCKUS, The Chivalrous Crickets, and the Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado. Recent Recordings: "Orpheus" by Majel Connery, Emi Ferguson's "Amour Cruel," and "Arcangelo's Circle," by the Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado. Paul is an active performer and recording artist of music ranging from historical resurrections to his own creations.

Doug Balliett (bass): Bassist, composer, and poet based in New York City. The *New York Times* has described his compositions as "vivid, emotive, with contemporary twists." Popular new music blog "I Care if You Listen" has critiqued Mr. Balliett's work as "weird in the best possible way" (A Gnostic Passion) and "light-

hearted yet dark...it had the audience laughing one minute and in tears the next..." (*Pyramus and Thisbe*). Member, ACRONYM, RUCKUS, Oracle Hysterical, AMOC. He teaches double bass and violone at the Juilliard School, as well as classes in Historical Performance and The Beatles.

Adam Cockerham (theorbo/baroque guitar): As an accompanist and continuo player, Cockerham has performed with numerous ensembles in New York and San Francisco. Beyond chamber music, Cockerham concentrates on 17th-century Italian opera and has been involved in numerous modern world premiere performances with companies such as Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik and Ars Minerva. Cockerham is a doctoral candidate at the Juilliard School.

Elliott Figg (harpsichord/organ): Keyboardist, conductor, and composer from Dallas, Texas. Member: RUCKUS, ACRONYM, New York Baroque Incorporated, and New Vintage Baroque. Recent engagements include: Conductor and harpsichordist for *L'Amant Anonyme* with Little Opera Theatre of New York; assistant conductor and harpsichordist for Vivaldi's *Farnace*, and Cavalli's *Veremonda*, both with Spoleto Festival USA; and assistant conductor and harpsichordist for *Dido and Aeneas* with L.A. Opera. BM, MM, composition, University of North Texas. Graduate Diploma, The Juilliard School.



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