

Concerts at the Point
presents ...

RUCKUS

FEATURING
EMI FERGUSON &
RACHELL ELLEN WONG

STRAWBERRY FIELDS:
HANDEL, SANCHO, AND
ENGLISH COUNTRY DANCES

FEBRUARY 22, 2026, 3:00 PM

WESTPORT POINT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1912 MAIN ROAD, WESTPORT POINT, MASSACHUSETTS

CHRISTINE MAIATO FITZGERALD

OUR COVER ARTWORK FOR THIS CONCERT is a painting titled "Dhyana" by Dartmouth multidisciplinary artist Christine Maioto FitzGerald. "Dyhana" is the Sanskrit word for meditation, which aptly represents the themes of transformation and wisdom that infuse her paintings, drawings, and photographs.

Christine's compositions blend elements of color, symmetry, contrast, form, and space through which a rigorous love of texture and detail emerges. A New Bedford native, Christine is active in the city's arts community and is a juried member of the National Association of Women Artists.

She will be having a solo exhibit at Gallery X in July. You can learn more about the artist and her work at maiatofitzart.com.

TODAY'S CONCERT IS UNDERWRITTEN IN PART BY A GRANT FROM THE GRIMSHAW-GUDEWICZ CHARITABLE FOUNDATION.

Concerts at the Point

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2026

RUCKUS, FEATURING EMI FERGUSON & RACHELL ELLEN WONG

STRAWBERRY FIELDS: HANDEL, SANCHO, AND ENGLISH COUNTRY DANCES

(PLAYED WITHOUT INTERMISSION)

IGNATIUS SANCHO (c. 1729-1780)

LADY MARY MONTAGU'S REEL - CULFORD HEATH CAMP - RUFFS
AND RHEES

From The 12 Country Dances for the Year 1779

G. F. HANDEL (1685-1759)

TRIO IN G, OP. 5 # 4

Tempo Ordinario - Allegro - Passacaille - Gigue - Minuett

SANCHO: AIR - BUSHY PARK - LORD DALKEITH'S REEL

HANDEL: TRIO IN E MINOR, OP. 5 #3

Andante - Allegro - Sarabande - Allemande - Rondeau - Gavotte

SANCHO: ROYAL BISHOP - LINDRINDOD LASSES -
STRAWBERRIES AND CREAM

HANDEL: TRIO IN D MAJOR, OP. 5 #2

*Largo (B minor trio) - Adagio - Allegro - Musette - Allegro - Musette -
Marche - Gavotte*

SANCHO: DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE'S REEL - TRIP TO
DILLINGTON - ALL OF ONE MIND - MUNGO'S DELIGHT - LADY
MARY MONTAGU'S REEL

ENSEMBLE

Emi Ferguson, flute

Rachell Ellen Wong, violin

RUCKUS:

Elliot Figg, harpsichord

Evan Premo, bass

Anthony Albrecht, cello (appears courtesy of The Bowerbird Collective)

Paul Holmes Morton, guitar

Dušan Balarin, guitar and lute

Clay Zeller-Townson, bassoon and percussion



THE PERFORMERS



EMI FERGUSON plays baroque flutes, modern flutes, and everything in between as a soloist and a member of leading early music and contemporary ensembles. A 2023 recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, Emi can be heard live in concerts and festivals around the world as a soloist and 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 in Southern California.

Her recordings celebrate her fascination with reinvigorating music and instruments of the past for the present. Her debut album, *Amour Cruel*, an indie-pop song cycle inspired by the music of the 17th-century French court, was released by Arezzo Music in September 2017, spending four weeks on the classical, classical crossover, and world music Billboard charts. 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, and is currently one of the

hosts of 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 50 incredible composers.

Emi graduated from Juilliard with undergraduate and graduate degrees with Scholastic Distinction in flute performance, as well as a second graduate degree in Historical Performance as a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow. She has taught on the faculty of the Juilliard School, the Bach Virtuosi Festival, and the University at Buffalo. Born in Japan and raised in London and Boston, she now resides in New York City. More at: emiferguson.com.

RACHELL ELLEN WONG, violinist, made history in 2020 when she was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, becoming the only baroque artist to receive the honor. Her exceptional blend of technical virtuosity on gut strings, expressive musicianship, and understanding of period performance practices has garnered international critical acclaim and a dedicated following. With performances across six continents, she has established herself as one of the leading historical performers of her generation, collaborating with esteemed ensembles such as the Academy of Ancient Music, Jupiter Ensemble, Bach Collegium Japan, The English Concert, and Les Arts Florissants, among others. Equally accomplished on the modern violin, Rachell made her first public appearance with Philharmonia Northwest at age eleven and has since performed as a soloist with orchestras such as the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and the Seattle Symphony. Currently, she serves as concertmaster of the Seattle Baroque Orchestra, and is on faculty at the Valley of the Moon Music Festival in Sonoma, California.



Notable appearances from Rachell's 2023-24 season include performances with the New World Symphony, Camerata Pacifica, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Ilumina Festival in Sao Paulo, Reno Chamber Orchestra, The Northwest Sinfonietta, and The Rome Chamber Music Festival. Alongside the exceptional conductor and keyboardist David Belkovski, Rachell is co-founder of Twelfth Night. Founded in 2021, Twelfth Night's notable engagements include Early Music at Carnegie Hall, Cal Performances at UC Berkeley, San Diego Early Music, the Friends of Chamber Music Kansas City, Chamber Music Society of Logan, and New World Symphony.

Among her many awards, Rachell was the Grand Prize winner of the inaugural Lillian and Maurice Barbash J.S. Bach Competition. Originally from the Pacific Northwest, she lives in New York City with her husband and two bunnies. Rachell performs on a baroque violin from the school of Joachim Tielke ca. 1700, and a violin made in 1953 by Carlo de March.

For more information, please visit rachellwong.com.



RUCKUS is a shapeshifting, collaborative baroque ensemble with a visceral and playful approach to early music. Described as “the world’s only period-instrument rock band” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*),

Ruckus's core is a continuo group, the baroque equivalent of a jazz rhythm section: guitars, keyboards, cello, bassoon and bass. From their core team, they expand into varied configurations with a roster of some of North America's leading soloists of the Baroque repertoire. The NYC-based 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*) that's "achingly delicate one moment, incisive and punchy the next" (*New York Times*). The group's members are among the most creative and virtuosic performers in North American early music.

Ruckus is the house band for Hudson Hall's baroque opera productions, directed by R.B. Schlather. The *New York Times*' Zachary Woolfe wrote: "Ruckus aptly describes itself as a band: it's that tight, and that wild." In spring 2025, the band released *The Edinburgh Rollick* (featuring violinist Keir GoGwilt) bringing new life to the tunes of Neil Gow, one of Scotland's most important 18th-century composers. In a current project, Ruckus joins Davóne Tines in a collaboration entitled "What is Your Hand in This?" The program, marking the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, asks: How can we passionately address wrongs while coexisting as a people? Can we find compassion for others and for ourselves? The repertoire spans early American hymnody, Handel's *Messiah*, abolition-era songs, mid-20th century protest songs, and commissions from Carnegie Hall and Hudson Hall, making its New York premiere at Carnegie Hall in January 2026.

ANTHONY ALBRECHT, cellist, has an international performance and production career as an impresario of world-class events. He has frequently appeared with the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra, the Australian Haydn Ensemble, il Pomo d'Oro and New Vintage Baroque (NYC). Committed to musical outreach, Anthony self-produced a solo tour of over 90 concerts in regional Australia called "Bach to the Bush." He was the first Australian graduate of The Juilliard School's Historical Performance program in New York City, earning a Master of Music in 2014. He earned an MBA in 2022, and is a PhD candidate at Darwin University in Australia.

DUŠAN BALARIN, a Peruvian-Croatian lutenist based in New York City, is a versatile soloist and accompanist. Dušan regularly performs with leading early music organizations including The Haydn & Handel Society, Sonnambula, RUCKUS Early Music, The Washington Bach Consort, ARTEK, Harmonia Stellarum, and Early Music New York. A Juilliard graduate and recipient of the prestigious Historical Performance Scholarship, Dušan performed widely with Juilliard 415 in North America and Europe. He apprenticed with renowned British lute virtuoso Nigel North, earning his Master of Music in Historical Performance with highest honors from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music.

ELLIOT FIGG is a keyboardist, conductor, and composer from Dallas, Texas. He is a graduate of the Historical Performance Program at The Juilliard School, where he studied harpsichord with Kenneth Weiss. He also studied with Arthur Haas at the Yale School of Music. Elliot performs regularly with New York-based early music and contemporary ensembles, including Ruckus, ACRONYM, New York Baroque Incorporated and New Vintage Baroque. At Spoleto Festival USA, he was assistant conductor and harpsichordist for Vivaldi's *Farnace* and Cavalli's *Veremonda*. Elliot received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in music composition from the University of North Texas.

PAUL HOLMES MORTON studied classical guitar under the instruction of Ernesto Tamayo, Marc Teicholz, and Sergio Assad. While attending the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, he studied lute with Richard Savino and continuo with Corey Jamason. Morton performs regularly across the North America as a baroque continuo player with Ruckus, New Vintage Baroque, and the Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado. Based in New York City, he recently completed his studies in historical performance at The Juilliard School instructed by Daniel Swenberg and Charles Weaver.

EVAN PREMIO, bass, is a soloist, composer and artistic director who lives in rural Vermont. Evan co-founded Scrag Mountain Music, and he has designed and participated in numerous residencies in Spain,

Germany and Abu Dhabi. He has performed at Carnegie Hall and at summer chamber music festivals throughout the country, and has been featured as a soloist and chamber musician on National Public Radio's *Performance Today*.

CLAY ZELLER-TOWNSON, bassoon and percussion, is the founder and Artistic Director of Ruckus. Based between Vermont and New York City, he plays with the leading period instrument groups including: Tafelmusik, The Handel and Haydn Society, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Boston Baroque and Trinity Baroque Orchestra. He holds a Bachelor's degree and Performer's Certificate from The Eastman School of Music, a Master's degree from The Juilliard School and the Advanced Certificate in Music Education from CUNY-Brooklyn College. He has produced and premiered many new works for early instruments and is a visiting Instructor of Baroque Bassoon at New England Conservatory.



PROGRAM NOTES

While George Frideric Handel and Ignatius Sancho never met each other, they inhabited the same world, and shared one thing for certain: the transcendent joy that comes from a life of music and dance with good company. And if there was one thing that encapsulated the joy of togetherness in 18th-century England, it was the English Country Dance. These dances rose above class distinction: they were found in ballrooms, barnyards, gardens and pubs alike. The country dance, more than those formal minuets and French dances, is what the British wanted to dance to until the sun came up. Sweating, laughing, spinning, holding hands.... propelled onwards by the unrelenting groove of the music.



IGNATIUS SANCHO (c. 1729-1780) was a remarkable member of 18th-century London and was a pivotal figure in the abolition movement in England. He is one of the first Black musicians to publish their compositions and was likely the first British African to vote. He was born on a slave ship en route from Africa to the Caribbean about 1729, and was brought to England as an enslaved person when he was two years

old. In Greenwich, England, he was given to three young girls, who decided to give the child the surname of Sancho (after the Cervantes character). Ignatius's luck began to change upon meeting a family friend, the Duke of Montagu, who fostered Ignatius's education and became his leading advocate. Ignatius eventually escaped his enslavement and was supported by the Montagu family, from whom he received a modest inheritance. This allowed him to support himself

and pursue his dream of becoming an actor. Following a brief acting career, he opened a grocery and oil supply business in Westminster, where he worked and created community until his death. Sancho began to be known in wider circles when, in 1766, his correspondence with the popular novelist Laurence Sterne was published.

"I am sure you will applaud me for beseeching you to give one half hour's attention to slavery, as it is at this day practised in our West Indies.—That subject, handled in your striking manner, would ease the yoke (perhaps) of many—but if only of one—Gracious God! - what a feast to a benevolent heart!"

— Sancho to Sterne

The publication of Ignatius's writing on slavery in this manner had a galvanizing effect on the abolition movement, and began his life as a publicly known person. His shop became known as the place in London to gather and talk not only about politics, but also about music, dance, and the arts. Upon his death, many of his letters were collected and published, and were popular enough to go through multiple editions. They are full of humor, passion, humility, and document a vibrant life full of love, friendship, music and dance.

Ignatius's musical output is largely dances: minuets, country dances, cotillions, etc. One can imagine the social gatherings at his store, and at the houses of his friends, where dances long into the night included his newest material. Ignatius also published *A New Collection of Songs*, for voice and basso continuo, which includes settings of Shakespeare and contemporary poets. He even wrote a musical theory treatise which has sadly been lost to time.

His *12 Country Dances for the Year 1779* are dedicated to "Miss North," whom scholars generally conclude must be one of the three daughters of Lord Frederick North, Prime Minister of England 1770-1782. Sancho would have come into contact with this family through his second family of patronage, the Brudenells. Originally set for the harpsichord, these dances are playfully written and set with delightful

titles. This is a set of functional country dances, complete with instructions for dancers alongside each score. They are occasionally danced today in English Country Dance circles. While many of Ignatius's compositions are distinctly *galant*, the *12 Country Dances* are spare, with a direct, earthbound style. The melodies are ear-worms, the rhythms propulsive and the set order very considered.

The titles of Sancho's dances in the *12 Country Dances* seem to be a mix of characters familiar to the dedicatee: these are friends, acquaintances, favorite desserts ("Strawberrys and Cream"), vacation places. However, the final dance was most definitely for Ignatius himself: "Mungo's Delight," a remarkable dance, outside of the norm of the rest of collection both in melodic style (extreme leaps), and with a mixed major/minor mode. "Mungo" likely references a character from the play *The Padlock* by Issac Bickerstaffe (1769), a part Ignatius probably performed during his acting career. There's an air of wistful melancholy to this tune, and as the last work of this collection, it makes one wonder what it meant for Ignatius.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759) loomed large over all English



concert music of the 18th century, and is referenced in Ignatius's letters as being among his favorite composers. Though born in Germany, Handel became one of England's most celebrated composers, both in his lifetime, and still today.

As a young man on the European continent, Handel had often composed for the demands of aristocratic patronage, but in England he adapted his music to the opinions and tastes of a wider public. "More than anyone else, he democratized music, and in this

respect his popular oratorios, his songs, and his best-loved instrumental works have a social significance that complements their purely musical importance. Handel's music became an indispensable part of England's national culture." (Charles Cudworth, *Encyclopedia Britannica*)

Handel's Op. 5 Trio Sonatas were written in 1738, probably after constant nagging from his friends (and publisher) to publish more instrumental chamber music. In private company, Handel was known for showing off at the keyboard and performing arias from his operas and oratorios, but the only trios that had been published up until then were a bootlegged set cobbled together by a publisher from his early days in Italy. The Op. 5 collection shows Handel, decades into his time in England, at the full height of his compositional ability, creating brilliant works in the British pastoral manner. The Opus 5 Trio Sonatas are among his best instrumental chamber works, evoking bucolic bliss and the joy of good company. These sonatas also bring dances to the fore: they are full of zesty gavottes, warm minuets, and one time-stopping *passacaille*.

The British slave trade also touched Handel's life. Scholars are debating now about the extent to which Handel engaged in investing in the Royal African Company, as Handel was often paid for his work through receiving stock. He typically would cash out the stocks soon after receiving them, because he was often cash-strapped thanks to his obsession with the never-lucrative opera business. And the objects for sale in Sancho's store? Sugar, tobacco, tea and oil.

Author: Clay Zeller-Townson



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