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# Radiant Bach with Emi Ferguson and Ruckus

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Baroque flutist and Brookline native Emi Ferguson is known for stretching the boundaries of baroque music, and her new CD features her collaborative bandmates Ruckus, with plenty of surprises.

The next time you hear the Handel and Haydn Society, note the earthy and soaring sound of their new principal flutist Emi Ferguson (<https://www.emiferguson.com/>). You can hear that sound on her new CD, too, where she not only spins out Bach's most profoundly melancholy phrases, but jams with sheer dazzle in arrangements featuring her band Ruckus.

Everyone on the new album *Fly the Coop* (yes, even the banjo player) trained at Juilliard and worked with the world's finest early music mentors. But they're also deeply interested in other kinds of music that involve experimentation and, especially, improvisation. Ferguson says they bring their historically accurate performance brains into their playing, along with their experimental improvising brains. The result unleashes the kind of unexpected music-making that must have delighted and tickled audiences in Bach's day.

The CD opens with an arrangement of Bach's G major prelude from Book II of his *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Ferguson and baroque bassoonist Clay Zeller-Townson play in counterpoint with the spirit of two jazz musicians trading fours. They're buoyed by the vivid and joyous bass player Evan Premo, while the gambist and guitarist slap and strum the piece into a high-octane dance number that will leave you smiling.

And check out track 9! The Siciliano from Bach's gorgeous Flute Sonata in E gets a whole new feel thanks to Emi Ferguson's recent obsession with Rosemary Clooney. The classic recording of "Mambo Italiano" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44CQbWDDd64>) famously features a grooving harpsichord, and as it turns out, that harpsichord was borrowed from Juilliard. When Emi Ferguson brought the song to the attention of Ruckus harpsichordist Elliott Figg, he found a way to incorporate the irresistible qualities of that gritty number into Bach's sonata.

There are other surprises, too, but never at the expense of the expressively organized genius of Bach. As Emi Ferguson told one interviewer, *Fly the Coop* imagines pieces in the way they think Bach and his friends might have done them over a couple of beers.

Here's all the energy of the opening prelude performed in concert:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1subeNPTbBk>)

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For more information and to purchase this album, visit the *Fly the Coop* online store (<https://www.flythecoopbach.com/>).

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