PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

Soka Performing Arts Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MAKING THEIR ORANGE COUNTY DEBUT, "THE WORLD'S ONLY PERIOD-INSTRUMENT ROCK BAND": FLUTIST EMI FERGUSON & RUCKUS COME TO SOKA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



Ruckus with Emi Ferguson (Photo: Fay Fox)

(IRVINE, CA, OCTOBER 15, 2026)—The Philharmonic Society of Orange County and Soka Performing Arts Center present flutist **Emi Ferguson** with baroque band, **Ruckus**, Saturday, November 21, 2026 at 8pm at Soka Performing Arts Center. Making their Orange County debut with *Fly the Coop*, Ferguson and Ruckus bring to life the music featured on their collaborative debut album, which reached No. 2 on Billboard's Classical Albums chart. The program reimagines Bach's Flute Sonatas and Keyboard Preludes through

inventive new arrangements for baroque flute and the forces of Ruckus, which include theorbos, baroque guitars, baroque bassoon, cello, viola da gamba, harpsichord, organ, bass, and the occasional banjo. Praised by *The New York Times* as "blindingly impressive… a fizzing, daring display of personality and imagination," *Fly the Coop* offers a fresh, adventurous take on Baroque music. This performance is part of the Eclectic Orange Series sponsored by the Jelinek Family Trust, with the Shanbrom Family Foundation sponsoring Emi Ferguson's appearance.

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' core is a continuo group, the baroque equivalent of a jazz rhythm section: guitars, keyboards, cello, bassoon and bass. 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." Ruckus' next production at Hudson Hall will be Handel's final opera, *Deidamia,* which comes to the stage in spring 2027. 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. Praised as "a perfect meeting of folk repertoire and ancient instruments" (*Le Canard Folk*), it came to NYC in January 2026 at Music Before 1800, New York City's oldest early music organization.

Ruckus joined 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? Can we find compassion for ourselves? The repertoire spans early American hymnody, Handel's *Messiah*, Benjamin Carr's *Federal Overture*, abolition-era songs, mid-20th century protest songs, and features commissions from Carnegie Hall and Hudson Hall. It made its New York premiere at Carnegie Hall in January 2026.

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. She is the founder of Exquisite Corpse, a collective dedicated to music that resists easy categorization.

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, spent four weeks on the classical, classical crossover, and world music Billboard charts. Beyond the concert stage and studio, Emi has appeared in nationally recognized events and media. She was a featured performer alongside Yo-Yo Ma, Paul Simon, and James Taylor at the 10th Anniversary Memorial Ceremony of 9/11 at Ground Zero, where her performance of “Amazing Grace” was televised worldwide. Her performance that day is now part of the permanent collection at the 911 Museum.

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. She developed the WQXR series *This Composer Is SICK!*, exploring the impact of Syphilis on historical composers, and is also a host for WQXR’s *Young Artists Showcase* and *Once Upon A Composer*. Her book, *Iconic Composers*, introduces music lovers of all ages to 50 incredible Western Classical composers from the past 1,000 years.

Emi has taught on the faculties of The Juilliard School, the Bach Virtuosi Festival, and the

University at Buffalo in addition to teaching masterclasses at universities around the country. Born in Japan and raised in London and Boston, she now resides in New York.

The concert will take place at Soka Performing Arts Center, located at 1 University Drive, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656. Tickets start at $40 and are available at the Philharmonic Society box office at (949) 553-2422, or online at philharmonicsociety.org, and through the Soka Performing Arts Center box office at (949) 480-4278 and online at performingarts.soka.edu.

All artists, dates, venues, programs, and prices are subject to change.

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ABOUT THE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY:

Founded in 1954 as Orange County's first music organization, the Philharmonic Society of Orange County presents national and international performances of the highest quality and provides dynamic and innovative music education programs for individuals of all ages to enhance the lives of Orange County audiences through music.

Since its inception, the Philharmonic Society has evolved and grown with the county's changing landscape, presenting artists and orchestras who set the standard for artistic achievement from Itzhak Perlman, Gustavo Dudamel, Yo-Yo Ma, and Renée Fleming to the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and many others. In addition, the Philharmonic Society celebrates multi-disciplinary performances under its Eclectic Orange brand and embraces music from a wide range of countries with its World Music performances. Its celebrated concerts introduce children to classical music with creative and inspiring performances, instilling music appreciation for future generations.

The Philharmonic Society's nationally recognized Youth Music Education Programs, offered free of charge, engage nearly 70,000 students annually through curriculum-based music education programs that aim to inspire, expand imaginations, and encourage

learning at all levels. These programs are made possible by the Committees of the Philharmonic Society comprised of nearly 450 volunteer members who provide more than 40,000 hours of in-kind service each year. As a key youth program, the exceptional Orange County Youth Symphony and String Ensemble provide top-tier training to the area's most talented young musicians through multi-level ensemble instruction, leadership training, touring opportunities, challenging professional repertoire, and performances in world-class venues. The Philharmonic Society also promotes life-long learning connecting with colleges and universities to conduct masterclasses and workshops and providing pre-concert lectures to introduce audiences to program selections.

ABOUT SOKA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER:

For 15 seasons, Soka Performing Arts Center has presented extraordinary live performances on the campus of Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo, California. The 1,032-seat concert hall is renowned for its worldclass acoustics by Yasuhisa Toyota, well known for his acoustical designs for Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles and Suntory Hall in Tokyo. Reflecting the university's commitment to sustainability, the concert hall and adjacent Maathai Hall (housing a black box theatre and dance studio) adhere to Gold LEED standards and feature green "vegetated" roofs. Soka Performing Arts Center's photovoltaic cells generate about 15% of the facility's electrical needs. More than 800 performances have taken place at the university's premier venue since its dedication on May 27, 2011.

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FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

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WHAT: **Emi Ferguson, flute & Ruckus**

WHEN: Saturday, November 21, 2026, 8pm

PROGRAM: *Fly the Coop*

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

The Craftsman, BWV 1034 (ca. 1724)
Prelude in G major, after BWV 884
Sonata in E minor, BWV 1034
Prelude in E minor, after BWV 855
Sonata in E minor, BWV 1034

The Teacher and the Student, BWV 1033 (ca.1717/1731)
Aria, from the *Goldberg Variations*, BWV 988
Sonata in C major, BWV 1033

The Unpredictable
(selections to be announced from the stage)

The Eccentric, BWV 1035 (ca. 1741)
Sonata in E major, BWV 1035
Prelude in E major, after BWV 815a

WHERE: Soka Performing Arts Center
1 University Drive, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

TICKETS: Ticket prices start at $40.

Available at the Philharmonic Society box office (949) 553-2422.

Tickets are also available at the Soka box office at (949) 480-4278 and online at performingarts.soka.edu

INFORMATION: Call (949) 553-2422 or visit www.philharmonicsociety.org