

In this exploration of the origins of the related genres of the sarabande and chaconne, we aim to reverse the conspicuous erasure of Mesoamericans and Africans from the early history of Western notated music. In the first part of the program, we perform repertoire related to constructions of racial identity, “color prejudice” that abounded in early modern texts as part of the colonization process, and interfaith and cultural contacts during the global early modern period. Importantly, though, several of the *villancicos* we perform demonstrate the use of complex, African-inspired rhythm and provide the best strains of evidence that we have of African connections to the sarabande and the chaconne. Their performance thus reveals the crucial presence of Africans and Mesoamericans in this music as well as their hitherto overlooked centrality to the history of these genres.

Ensemble Origo is an early music ensemble directed by Connecticut-based musicologist and conductor Eric Rice. Its aim is to present vibrant performances of early music (from the Middle Ages through the baroque) that reflect the context in which the repertoire was originally produced and heard; “Origo” is Latin for “earliest beginning,” “lineage,” or “origin.” The ensemble draws on a roster of musicians from Connecticut, Boston, and New York.

(NOTE: The pieces performed as part of this session come from a very specific moment in the history of racial constructs and often contain racial stereotypes and even coarse, sometimes offensive language. We do not endorse these constructs or language. However, we also cannot avoid these things if we are to bring to light the enormous contribution of Africans. Thus, the approach of Ensemble Origo is to contextualize these works and clearly articulate our goals of decolonization in remarks during our performance.)

Special thanks to Mary Gerbi, our business manager, for invaluable logistical assistance for this project; to the University of Connecticut School of Fine Arts Dean’s Office and Research Grant Committee for supporting this event.

For the texts and translations
for this program (which will
also be projected), scan here:



For performer
biographies, scan here:



Un sarao de la Chacona

Tracing the African and Mesoamerican Origins
of the Sarabande and the Chaconne

Saturday, November 16, 2023, at 10:45 am
Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society
State Ballroom, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, Illinois



Camila Parias & Jennifer Bates, *sopranos*
Catherine Hedberg, *alto*; Michael Barrett, *tenor and recorder*
Jared Taylor Swope, *baritone*; Sarah Mead, *bass viola da gamba*
Daniel S. Lee, *violin*; Daniel Meyers, *percussion*
Hideki Yamaya, *guitar & theorbo*
Eric Rice, *Director*

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I. Puebla, New Spain, ca. 1624

The End of Matins for Christmas and Celebrations that May Have Followed

Te Deum à 4	Francisco Guerrero (1528-1599)
Xicochi xicochi à 4	Gaspar Fernandes (ca. 1570–1629)
Dame albriciã mano Anton à 4	Fernandes
A la xacara xacarilla à 4	Juan Gutierrez de Padilla (ca. 1590–1664)
Eso rigor e repente	Fernandes

II. Early Printing History of the Sarabande

Saravanda española muy facil (1626) (Spanish Rasgueado Sarabande)	Luis de Bricendo, fl. 1620)
Sarabanda (1640) (Italian Non-Rasgueado Sarabande)	Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger (ca. 1580–1651)
Two Sarabandes from the Ballet de Monseigneur de Navarre (1612) (Fast French Sarabande)	Michael Praetorius (ca. 1571–1621)

Cloris, veux-tu savoir (1642)
(Slow French Sarabande)

Jean Boyer (ca. 1600–1648)

III. Early Printing History of the Chaconne

Diverse bizzarrie sopra la Vecchia Sarabanda o pur Ciaccona (Combined Saraband and Chaconne)	Nicola Matteis (d. after 1713)
O vezzasetta dalla chioma d'oro Aria sopra la chaconne (1616) (Italian Variation Chaconne)	Andrea Falconieri (1585–1656)
Acceso mio core (1629)	Francesco Mannelli (ca. 1596–1667)
Zefiro torna (1632)	Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)

IV. The Roots of the Chaconne

Un sarao de la Chacona (1624) (Mentioned by Cervantes)	Juan Arañes (d. ca. 1649)
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Though the sarabande and the chaconne were stylized sections of courtly suites by Baroque composers such as Scarlatti and Bach, their origins are far removed from any European court, stemming instead from New Spain. In a book about the Spanish colony in 1579, a Dominican friar, Francisco Diego Durán, described the sarabande as a lascivious dance and identified it with the indigenous population. However, at least one surviving song — a *villancico* for Christmas — links it with enslaved Africans, suggesting that both populations were involved in the creation of the genre. In this program, Ensemble Origo aims to contextualize these origins, showing how a song that mentions the dance was likely performed following Christmas services. The next two sections of the concert trace the printing history of both genres (which were related at one time) from simple guitar strumming patterns that sometimes accompanied voices to the stylized instrumental works adopted by hundreds of European composers in the centuries that followed. The program aims to bring what is known of the genres' lost—or suppressed—histories to light, thus rethinking Eurocentric notions of these distinctive musical genres, their history, and their trajectory.