

26.1. Rebecca Cypess (New York, NY)

Orality and Literacy in the Music of Ignatius Sancho

The posthumously published correspondence of the Black British writer, butler, musician, and shopkeeper Ignatius Sancho (c. 1729–1780) has received extensive critical attention in recent decades, especially because it contributed to opening a space for Black authorship in the Atlantic world. Absent from discussions of Sancho's negotiation of orality, writing, and print have been Sancho's books of musical compositions—the volumes published during his lifetime, apparently with his involvement and oversight. Consideration of his instrumental dance music within the context of the genres in which he wrote reveals that he navigated the boundary between orality and print deliberately and meaningfully. His musical notation engages with the sentimental style, and his explicit use of French horns—extremely rare or among eighteenth-century English publications of dance music for small ensembles—refers to the presence of Black musicians in Britain. By engaging with and subverting conventions of musical notation and print, Sancho's music points beyond itself, guiding the reader or listener from the notated scores to the ineffable, transient sounds of the eighteenth-century Black experience.

Rebecca Cypess is Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of Undergraduate Arts and Sciences at Yeshiva University in New York. Her publications include *Women and Musical Salons in the Enlightenment* (2022) and *Curious and Modern Inventions: Instrumental Music as Discovery in Galileo's Italy* (2016). With the ensemble that she directs, the Raritan Players, she has explored compositions and performance practices that reveal untold stories from the eighteenth century, including that of the life and musical works of Ignatius Sancho. She has received the Noah Greenberg Award for contributions to historical performance and the Ruth A. Solie Award for a collection of essays of exceptional merit, both from the American Musicological Society.