THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

with a Latin accent

Manuel de Falla Four Spanish Pieces
Joaquín Turina Serenata
Luis Saglie El Angelito de Violeta
Roberto Sierra Sinfonietta
Peter Sculthorpe Irkanda IV

Alastair Duff–Forbes, violin
David Angell, conductor

2.30 pm, Sunday 24 November 2024
St. George's Hall, Newtown

Welcome to the Bourbaki Ensemble's programme of Spanish and Latin American music…and more! We present string works by the two leading Spanish composers of the early twentieth century, Manuel de Falla and Joaquín Turina. There is a thrilling *Sinfonietta* by Puerto Rican composer Roberto Sierra, and Luis Saglie contributes a *Fantasy* based on material by the Chilean songwriter and ethnomusicologist Violeta Parra, one of the founders of the Nueva Canción Chilena movement. As always, we include Australian music. Peter Sculthorpe's *Irkanda IV* may not have a "Latin accent", but we feel that it suits the overall mood of the programme. We welcome our long–time collaborator Alastair Duff–Forbes to play the solo violin part.

There is sad news to impart. Richard Willgoss, a long–time member of the Bourbaki Ensemble, passed away unexpectedly earlier this year. Richard performed in an amazing 48 Bourbaki concerts, mostly on violin, occasionally viola when required, making a heroic commute from Menai to attend rehearsals! He was also a member of the Strathfield Symphony Orchestra and was active in the Amateur Chamber Music Society. We express our condolences to his family, in particular his wife Sue, and will begin today's concert with the Samuel Barber *Adagio for Strings*. A number of us had the privilege of performing this at Richard's funeral, and we repeat it today in his memory.

Bourbaki dates for 2025 are yet to be finalised – let's be honest, they are barely thought about! – but we do hope to give a concert in late February featuring an engaging concerto for saxophone and strings. Expect an email from us early in the year. If you do not currently receive our emails and would like to, you can join up by scanning the QR code on the right. We look forward to sharing our music with you!

PROGRAMME

Samuel Barber Adagio for Strings
in memory of Richard Willgoss

Luis Saglie Fantasy for String Orchestra, *El Angelito de Violeta*

Joaquín Turina Serenata, Op. 87, for string orchestra

Peter Sculthorpe Irkanda IV, for solo violin, strings and percussion

Alastair Duff–Forbes, violin

INTERVAL — 20 minutes

Manuel de Falla Quatre Pièces Espagnoles, arranged for strings by David Angell

I. Aragonesa
II. Cubana
III. Montañesa (paysage)
IV. Andaluza

Roberto Sierra Sinfonietta for string orchestra

1. Ritmico
2. Expresivo
3. Vivo
4. Rápido

The *Fantasy for String Orchestra (El Angelito de Violeta)* by **Luis Saglie** is inspired by the themes of Violeta Parra, a Chilean multidisciplinary musician and artist. As a dedicated ethnomusicologist, her works preserve traditional Chilean and Latin American elements and identities, evident in both her original compositions and her adaptations and reinterpretations of traditional folk songs from Chile and the surrounding continent. The *Fantasy* establishes its unique musical voice through an extended palette of sonorities and colours, achieved through various extended techniques for strings, a percussive approach to handling the instruments, and the incorporation of the ensemble's voices. It is also rich in rhythmic complexities and irregular linear construction. As with many of Saglie's works, it aims to guide the listener on an emotionally charged journey of discovery and absorption.

Luis Saglie has garnered acclaim as a distinguished composer from international audiences, professional musicians, and critics alike. In addition to his composition work, he is an active conductor, pianist, and pedagogue.

October of 2024 saw the release of Saglie's *Three Piano Sonatas* on Da Vinci Classics, featuring Austrian pianist Stefan Stroissnig. His recently completed Piano Concerto No.1 *The Kookaburra Concerto* was commissioned by Vienna–based pianist Alexandra Scilocea and conductor Alejandra Urrutia. Its world premiere is scheduled with two performances on 6 and 7 June 2025 along with the Orquesta Filarmónica de Santiago in Chile's acclaimed Teatro Municipal.

Saglie is continually engaged with commissions from instrumentalists, symphonic and chamber ensembles, universities, and artistic centers. His music enjoys widespread performance across Europe, North and South America, Asia, and Oceania, and is frequently featured in CD repertoires by international artists.

His body of work includes symphonic works, concertos, chamber music, solo instrument compositions, music for film, and musical theatre. His scores are published and distributed worldwide by Universal Edition in Vienna.

Saglie double–majored in music composition and piano at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) before furthering his studies in Europe at the Music and Arts University in Vienna, studying conducting, piano and composition, and earning a Master of Arts in Musical Composition.

A recipient of numerous international prizes and awards, Saglie also serves as a curator and adjudicator for global music festivals and competitions. With over thirteen years of experience as a university professor across three countries, he currently teaches Music Composition at the University of Sydney, Conservatorium of Music in Australia.

Programme note kindly supplied by the composer.

Joaquín Turina (1882–1949) was a native of Seville, the capital city of the southern Spanish region of Andalusia. He studied music in Madrid, and further developed his compositional style in Paris at the same time as his compatriot Manuel de Falla. Like de Falla, he was influenced by the French imnpressionist composers, and returned to Spain at the outbreak of the First World War. His *Serenata* for strings (originally for string quartet, frequently performed by string orchestras) was composed shortly after he took up the post of Professor of Composition at the Madrid Royal Conservatory in 1931. In its haunting opening, violins and violas are instructed to play *sul ponticello* (on or near the bridge, producing a tone colour sometimes described as "metallic") over a *pizzicato* line in cellos and basses. There is a contrasting slower episode, sometimes langorous, sometimes passionate; this alternates with the opening material until the work ends in a burst of excitement.

The recognition of **Peter Sculthorpe** (1929–2014) as one of Australia's leading composers may be regarded as dating from the premiere in 1961 of *Irkanda IV*, which, according to the composer in his autobiography *Sun Music*, was his "first work... to receive wide and unanimous acclaim". In 1960 Sculthorpe had returned to Australia from study in Oxford because of his father's serious illness; *Irkanda IV* was completed the following year, the score headed "written upon the death of my father", and first performed by Wilfred Lehmann and the Astra Chamber Orchestra, conducted by George Logie–Smith.

The word *Irkanda* is of Aboriginal origin, and the composer takes it to mean "a remote and lonely place". His earlier compositions include *Irkanda I* for unaccompanied violin, a work which shares something of the mood of *Irkanda IV*, and two other pieces, later withdrawn, under the same title.

A feature of the score of *Irkanda IV* is the use made by the composer of detailed Italian directions going far beyond standard musical vocabulary. The opening of the piece, for example, is to be performed *con desiderio pieno di malincolia*, "with the fullest desire for melancholy". It unfolds a brooding violin melody above a static harmony: a device which Sculthorpe has used often and with great effect, evoking, in the opinion of some commentators, the flatness of much of the Australian horizon. After contrasting episodes the opening returns *fortissimo*, and is succeeded by a passage of somewhat martial character. After another *fortissimo* reprise of the opening the work reaches its climax in a passage marked *profondamente angosciato*, "profoundly anguished", which leads into a coda *preso da rassegnazione*, "seized by resignation".

The coda begins with slow, repeated notes on bass and cello, joined by anguished sighs in violas and cellos and leading into a brief cadenza, *con desiderio di solitudine*, for the solo violin. The cadenza is succeeded by a passage recomposed from a song written a year or two earlier, with which Sculthorpe had not been satisfied. The song sets words from D.H. Lawrence's *Sun in Me*; although *Irkanda* contains no vocal line, the text clearly underlies the composer's conception of the coda as "an affirmation of life and living".

A sun will rise in me, . . .
And a sun in heaven.
And beyond that, the immense sun behind the sun,
the sun of immense distances, . . .
And further, the sun within the atom
which is god in the atom.

Manuel de Falla's *Quatre Pièces Espagnoles* were specifically designed by the composer to portray four different aspects of Spanish regional culture. The *Aragonesa* is based largely on a triplet figure characteristic of the *jota*, a dance which originated in the northern region of Spain bounded by the central Pyrenees. The *Cubana* is inspired by the *guajira*, a musical idiom of sixteenth–century Cuban origin, whose beguiling flexibility springs from the rhythmic contrast of two different groupings of six notes, **one**–two–three–**four**–five–six juxtaposed with **one**–two–**three**–four–**five**–six. The impressionistic evocation of the Cantabrian landscape on Spain's northern coastline in *Montañesa* was described by Falla in a letter to the French critic and Hispanophile Henri Collet. "The church bells ringing in the distance, slow and sad songs, dances, and all this with a superb backdrop of imposing snow topped mountains... there is material there to make not just one piece, but a whole musical world." In the spectacular *Andaluza*, Falla depicts the fandangos and *cante–jondo* ("deep song", the oldest type of Andalusian music) of his birthplace.

Manuel de Falla (1876–1946) is widely recognised as one of the greatest of Spanish composers. Born in the southern Spanish region of Andalusia, he moved to Madrid to study piano and composition. In 1907 he relocated to Paris, where his acquaintances in the city's artistic circles included Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky and his compatriot Albéniz. Falla was much influenced by the impressionism of the French composers, who in their turn were fascinated by the musical idioms and the "exotic" image of Spain (Debussy: *Ibéria*, *La soirée dans Grenade*; Ravel: *Bolero*, *Rapsodie espagnole*). While in Paris, Falla completed his piano suite *Quatre Pièces Espagnoles*, which, owing to Debussy's influence, was taken up by the prestigious music publishers Durand.

In 1914 Falla returned to Spain, and over the next 25 years produced an increasing (though never very large) number of compositions, among them *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* for piano and orchestra. There were also a number of stage works, notably the comic ballet *El sombrero de tres picos* ("The Three-cornered Hat"), staged by the eminent impresario Sergei Diaghilev and designed by Pablo Picasso.

Falla's attitudes to the antagonists in the Spanish Civil War are not altogether clear: he expressed a desire to remain "above the workings of politics", and seems to have felt unable to fully accept the claims of either side. In 1939 – perhaps because of the recent victory of Franco and the Nationalists, perhaps because of the imminence of a vaster European conflict – Falla left Spain for Argentina. Beginning as a concert tour, the trip turned into a self–imposed exile from which Falla never returned, despite the enticements of substantial financial support from the Franco regime. At the instigation of his relatives, his body was brought back to Spain after his death. Although one wonders whether Falla would have approved of his posthumous repatriation, he surely would not have refused burial in the great cathedral of his native city Cádiz.

Roberto Sierra was born in Puerto Rico in 1953; his musical education included a period of study in Europe with leading modernist composer György Ligeti. He has written a large amount of acclaimed orchestral music, which has enjoyed performances at prestigious venues including Carnegie Hall and the first night of the BBC Proms in London. There is also a good deal of choral and chamber music.

Sierra's *Sinfonietta* combines the verve and vibrancy of his Latin American heritage with the "classical" sound of the string orchestra. Thrilling syncopations and driving melodies animate the first movement, though it ends quietly. The second has an almost baroque feel, beginning with a quietly expressive melody supported by a persistent line of *pizzicato* semiquavers; a dramatic "explosion" near the end is rendered even more startling by the restraint of its surrounds. The whole string orchestra plays *pizzicato* for the greater part of the brief scherzo–like third movement. The finale returns to the mood of the first movement, though including quiet melodic passages and a number of important parts for individual players. Strongly accented lines and complex rhythms build to an emphatic conclusion.

David Angell, conductor

photo: Steve Dimitriadis, www.mestevie.com

As a violist and chorister, David has performed under internationally famous conductors including Sir Charles Mackerras, Stuart Challender and Richard Bonynge. Since taking up conducting in 1998, he has directed a number of musical societies and orchestras, most frequently the Bourbaki Ensemble and Orchestra 143. Highlights have included a Bourbaki concert in the Utzon Room of the Sydney Opera House; and the Orchestra 143 Mozartathon, in which David conducted all the symphonies of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in a series of five concerts spread over a single weekend. He has also been guest conductor for two concerts with the Crendon Chamber Orchestra (Thame, UK), presenting programmes featuring works by Mahler, Vaughan Williams and Australian composers. David has studied conducting with Richard Gill.

Since the middle of 2023, David has been conducting The Lawyers' Orchestra, leading them in symphonies by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven; opera excerpts by Bizet and Verdi; and music by Mendelssohn, Fauré, Ravel and Elgar.

David is actively involved in arranging music for strings. The first Bourbaki Ensemble concert of 2022 premiered his arrangement of the accompaniment to Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder*, which was heard again in the Sydney Opera House this September; his orchestration of Debussy's *Children's Corner* suite has been performed in Australia and the UK. He has (with the composer's permission) adapted Andrew Ford's *Oma Kodu*, originally composed for clarinet and string quartet, as a work for clarinet and string orchestra. Today's concert includes the premiere performance of David's string version of Manuel de Falla's *Quatre Pièces Espagnoles*. He has also contributed translations of Russian and Italian poetry to the *Lied and Art Song Texts* website.

Alastair Duff–Forbes, violin

Alastair studied violin with Goetz Richter, Alice Waten, Chris Kimber and Carl Pini at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. He has performed in many masterclasses with artists of international renown, including Vladimir Ashkenazy, Dene Olding, Lara St. John, the Borodin Quartet, and the Goldner String Quartet.

Alastair has performed as a soloist with many orchestras including the Sydney Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra, the Balmain Sinfonia, the Strathfield Symphony Orchestra and Orchestra 143. He performed with the Bourbaki Ensemble the world premiere of *Chernobyl*, a violin concerto written for Alastair by Aaron Kenny.

Alastair has been Concertmaster of many orchestras including the Eminence Symphony Orchestra, Sydney University Graduate Choir Orchestra, The Metropolitan Orchestra, Balmain Sinfonia, Ryde Hunters Hill Symphony Orchestra and the Bourbaki Ensemble.

He has also been a member of many orchestras including the Opera Australia Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia and Sydney Scoring Orchestra.

Alastair has been an active chamber musician for many years. He has performed in a wide variety of events including the 2007 APEC Leaders' Conference with the Sapphire String Quartet, at the Sydney Opera House.

THE BOURBAKI ENSEMBLE

The Bourbaki Ensemble is a chamber string orchestra which has been giving concerts in Newtown since 2001. September 2024 saw the Ensemble's Sydney Opera House debut. Programmes include masterpieces of the string repertoire, as well as fascinating music by present–day composers. Each concert features at least one work by an Australian composer.

Greek by ancestry, French by citizenship and service, fascinated by all sorts of cultures, General **Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki** (1816–1897) was described by memoirist Ernest Legouvé as "un vrai cosmopolite". At one time Bourbaki undertook a study of Spanish popular music, and is even said to have composed a *zarzuela* under the title *El general francés*. Late in life, it appears, Bourbaki sent the score of his work to Claude Debussy, who dismissed it as a triviality; nonetheless, it was not long afterwards that Debussy's interest in Spanish music began to be evident.

Violins Warwick Pulley, Julia Pokorny, Camille Hanrahan–Tan, Madeleina Hanrahan–Tan, Emlyn Lewis–Jones, Deborah McGowan, Daniel Morris, Rob Newnham, Paul Pokorny, Rob Sison, Alvin Wan, Victor Wu.

Violas Kathryn Ramsay, David Loonam, Joseph Phillips, Evonne Voukidis.

Violoncellos Catherine Willis, Liesje Croeser, Ying Huang, Nicole McVicar.

Basses Sasha Cotis, George Machado, Maureen Wallace.

Percussion Kane Wheatley.