



# andalusian fantasy

the piano music of **Lionel Sainsbury**



Navona  
Records

FINE MUSIC



It is appropriate that this album's title refers not just to the eponymous work but to several other pieces throughout the programme. "I'm fascinated by the Spanish and Latin-American traditions," says the composer, mentioning also that he was influenced in his youth by the recordings of Paco Peña and Paco de Lucia. "Flamenco music has been described as containing 'the brilliance of the guitar playing, the haunting laments of the singers and the electrifying rhythms of the dancers.' It's that triumvirate, and its incredible complexity that appeals to me — that dark passion, almost a blackness, or *duende*, a wonderful, untranslatable Spanish word that combines nostalgia and suffering."

**ANDALUSIAN FANTASY**, written in the summer of 1990, is inspired by the flamenco music of Andalusia. It is in three sections opening with a relentless dance rhythm before calming to a vivid evocation of the guitar, and a theme redolent of the kind of rough, guttural singing known as *cante jondo* (literally 'deep song'). There follows a passage marked *murmurando*, *languido*, which has a feeling of the heat haze of the southern Mediterranean, its intensity lending a blurred quality to the landscape. After a cadenza-like passage, Sainsbury then returns to the *cante jondo* subject before a recapitulation of the opening dance, the whole virtuosic work ending in a blaze of bravura.

Written the year after *Andalusian Fantasy*, **NOCTURNE** has a similar intensity, though it inhabits a very different sound world. Its opening subject has a Chopinesque quality, before the central section rises to a passionate, increasingly dissonant climax, making expansive use of the keyboard in a manner reminiscent of Rachmaninov.

The latest work on the album is the **SOUTH AMERICAN SUITE** of 1996. It draws its inspiration from the music of South America, in particular Brazil, as reflected in the Portuguese titles for several of its seven movements. Yet in the first two there is more than a glimpse of North America and the blues. *Passeio* ('promenade' or 'stroll') puts one in mind of a Fats Waller number, while some of the harmonies of *Saudade* (another untranslatable word implying a sense of nostalgic longing) are distinctly Gershwin-esque, its blues-like musings twice interrupted by an impressionistic passage evoking the mysterious depths of the rain forest. *Rumba* is a highly virtuosic toccata, which sends both hands off in dizzying, distinct interplay. *Canção* ('song') is lazy and languid, taking us, perhaps, to the edge of a lake and its lapping waters; the short middle part lapses briefly into a gentle tango. *Recuerdos de España* — which might be translated as 'Echoes of Spain' — is the second number of the Suite to demand a bravura technique, and reflects the specifically Spanish musical legacy to the South American continent; the middle section returns us once more to the world of flamenco, with the piano cleverly evoking the insistent, plaintive wail of *cante jondo*. *Escuridão* ('darkness') is marked *disagio* ('uneasy'), and again might suggest the black depths of the rain forest where we might imagine a wild animal is prowling — "a feeling of danger and uncertainty in a strange twilight world," says Sainsbury. The highly virtuosic finale of the Suite is an orgiastic, almost Alkanesque *Bacchanale*, with both hands again leading wildly independent lives, each voice insistent on its equal importance.

The **TWELVE PRELUDES**, composed between 1985 and 1987, can be seen as a series of *hommages* to various composers who were early

influences on Sainsbury. Jack Gibbons gave the first performance of the set at St. John's Smith Square, London, in 1987. Nos. 2, 6, and 11 clearly reflect the Spanish influence, while Nos. 3 and 4 are epigrammatic with the blues to the fore in the former and Gershwin much in evidence in the latter. No. 8 recalls Ravel with its subtle harmonies and cascading runs. Then there are serious, introspective Preludes, such as Nos. 1, 5, and 7, whereas Nos. 9 and 10 could be seen as another two that tip their hat to the blues and Gershwin respectively. According to Sainsbury, No. 11 evokes "a little Spanish courtyard with white-washed walls...." The urgent, insistent rhythm of Prelude No. 12 provides a fiery conclusion to the set. With indications to the performer such as *arraché*, *marcatissimo*, *risoluto*, it invokes something of the world of Scriabin and Rachmaninov, though the composer also cites the influence of Walton's *First Symphony*.

The earliest work on the album is **ESQUISSE** ('Sketch'), composed in 1983 when Lionel Sainsbury was 25. Says the composer: "There's a definite French flavour, I feel — a lot of Fauré and Ravel: Fauré in the harmony and perhaps Ravel in the 'feel.'"

The **CUBAN FANTASY** dates from over a decade later (1994), its initial carefree character very soon entering into more complex emotional territory. In the middle section there are passages with a reflective, even hypnotic character, where the swaying rhythm of the music almost seems to be mesmerised by itself. The final pages surge towards a wild peroration, with a technically challenging variation of the opening theme that propels the music — and this programme — to a tumultuous conclusion.



**LIONEL SAINSBURY** was born in Wiltshire, England, in 1958. He began to play the piano at an early age and soon started to compose his own music. His first serious piano lessons, at the age of 16, were with Margaret Brown, a visiting teacher at his school. He later studied composition with Patric Standford and piano with Edith Vogel at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

At the age of 21 he was awarded a Mendelssohn Scholarship, which brought him into contact with composers as diverse as Edmund Rubbra, John McCabe and Henri Dutilleux. Sainsbury's music has since been performed worldwide, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM in the United Kingdom, Radio France, NHK TV/Radio in Japan, and many channels in the United States.

Alongside a substantial body of piano music, Sainsbury's catalogue to date includes works for orchestra, strings, violin, cello, guitar, clarinet, and two pianos. Amongst artists who have performed his music are the pianists Mark Bebbington, Clara Rodríguez, Matthew Rickard, and the Black/Katayama piano duo; violinists Tasmin Little, Vít Mužík, and Rupert Marshall-Luck, clarinetist Anna Hashimoto, and guitarist Craig Ogden.

In 2002 his *Violin Concerto* was premiered at the Worcester (UK) Three Choirs Festival, with soloist Lorraine McAslan and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under Adrian Lucas. McAslan subsequently recorded the work with the BBC Concert Orchestra under Barry Wordsworth (Dutton CDLX 7245).

The premiere recording of Sainsbury's *Cello Concerto* followed in 2012 (Dutton CDLX 7284), performed by Raphael Wallfisch, with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by Martin Yates.

As a performer, Sainsbury's concerts have included the music of Bach, Scarlatti, Chopin, Debussy, Rachmaninov, and Schumann, alongside his own compositions.

© Jeremy Nicholas 2015

<b>1</b>	<b>Andalusian Fantasy Op.16</b>	<b>10:18</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Nocturne Op.18</b>	<b>7:34</b>
	<b>South American Suite Op.23</b>	<b>18:07</b>
<b>3</b>	I Passeio	2:44
<b>4</b>	II Saudade	4:15
<b>5</b>	III Rumba	2:09
<b>6</b>	IV Canção	2:24
<b>7</b>	V Recuerdos de España	2:35
<b>8</b>	VI Escuridão	1:42
<b>9</b>	VII Bacchanale	2:18
	<b>Twelve Preludes Op.11</b>	<b>25:58</b>
<b>10</b>	I Maestoso	3:21
<b>11</b>	II Allegro ben moderato	2:57
<b>12</b>	III Lento e languido	1:13
<b>13</b>	IV Allegro non troppo	1:05
<b>14</b>	V Lento sostenuto	1:23
<b>15</b>	VI Quasi presto	2:28
<b>16</b>	VII Poco lento	1:34
<b>17</b>	VIII Moderato	1:28
<b>18</b>	IX Lento e pesante	3:03
<b>19</b>	X Andante e semplice	1:01
<b>20</b>	XI Con malinconia	1:50
<b>21</b>	XII Allegro con fuoco	4:35
<b>22</b>	<b>Esquisse</b>	<b>2:51</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>Cuban Fantasy Op.22</b>	<b>9:16</b>

Total **1:13:51**

Lionel Sainsbury, **piano**

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

[www.navonarecords.com/andalusianfantasy](http://www.navonarecords.com/andalusianfantasy)  
[www.lionelsainsbury.com](http://www.lionelsainsbury.com)

All Tracks Recorded at the Holywell Music Room,  
Oxford United Kingdom

Tracks 10-21 recorded on February 12, 1993

Tracks 1-2 & 23 recorded on February 27, 1995

Tracks 3-9 & 22 recorded on January 12, 1997

Engineered & produced by **Peter Nicholls**

Biography photo **Horst Kolo**

Lionel Sainsbury's music is available from  
**[www.lionelsainsbury.com](http://www.lionelsainsbury.com)**

Executive Producer **Bob Lord**

Audio Director **Jeff LeRoy**

Mastering **Shaun Michaud**

Art & Production Director **Brett Picknell**

Graphic Designer **Emily Roulo**

A&R **Sam Renshaw**

Marketing Manager **Ethan Fortin**

[info@navonarecords.com](mailto:info@navonarecords.com)

[www.navonarecords.com](http://www.navonarecords.com)

223 Lafayette Road

North Hampton NH 03862

Navona Records is a PARMA  
Recordings company



NAVONA RECORDS NV5951

## ALSO ON NAVONA RECORDS

# sunlight & storms

the piano music of **Lionel Sainsbury**

*"Virtuosic and passionate oratory expressed through  
the piano - sharpened and softened by sultry accents."*  
- MusicWeb International

**AVAILABLE FROM ITUNES, AMAZON, 7DIGITAL,  
AND STREAMING ON SPOTIFY**