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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Special performances during the Wollombi Valley Sculpture Festival where archive meets performance, scholarship meets imagination, and forgotten connections begin to sing again.

WOLLOMBI, NSW — An extraordinary trail of forgotten music, archival discoveries and historic friendships stretching from nineteenth-century Spain to rural New South Wales and Western Australia will come to life this September in a unique performance presented as part of the **Wollombi Valley Sculpture Festival**.

The Far Side of Spain: Where the Waters Meet is a performance that uncovers a remarkable cultural connection between St Michael's Church in Wollombi and the Benedictine monastery of New Norcia in Western Australia. Combining live performance with historical research, the work brings to light a little-known story.

Performed by internationally acclaimed mezzo-soprano **Allegra Giagu** and bandoneon virtuoso **Owen Salomé**, the production draws on letters, rare musical manuscripts and the haunting sound of a century-old bandoneon to explore an unexpected network of relationships.

Central to the story is the friendship between Archbishop **John Bede Polding**, who laid the foundation stone of St Michael's Church, Wollombi, and **Dom Rosendo Salvado**, the Spanish Benedictine monk who founded New Norcia and became one of Australia's most significant musical and cultural figures.

The performance also carries a deeply personal dimension for Giagu, who was recently appointed Music Collections Curator at New Norcia. Long before taking up the role of caring for one of Australia's most important music archives, she spent more than a decade performing throughout the Wollombi Valley. Her parents owned the much-loved Panino restaurant, and during breaks from her studies in London she rehearsed in St Michael's Church and appeared regularly at venues in the Wollombi Valley.

Her return to Wollombi with this new work creates an unexpected convergence of personal history and professional scholarship, reconnecting two communities linked by history but separated by thousands of kilometres.

"The Far Side of Spain is an act of sonic archaeology," Giagu said. "It's about discovering how music can reveal relationships, histories and places that have almost been forgotten, allowing those stories to sing again."

Presented in the intimate setting of the historic St Michael's Church, the performance invites audiences to experience history through live music, storytelling and the acoustics of a building that sits at the heart of the story itself.

Event Details

The Far Side of Spain: Where the Waters Meet

Performers

- Allegra Giagu — Mezzo-Soprano
- Owen Salomé — Bandoneon

Dates

- Friday 18 September, 5:00–6:00 pm (optional reception follows at Grays Inn)
- Saturday 19 September, 5:00 – 6:00 pm

Venue

St Michael's Church, Wollombi

Tickets

\$85. Book via [Humanitix](#)

Media enquiries

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St Michael's Church

The first foundation stone of the Church of St Michael of the Archangel was laid in 1840 near Wollombi Brook. Following the great flood of 1893, the church was dismantled stone by stone and rebuilt on its present site in Wollombi.

About the Wollombi Valley Sculpture Festival

The biennial Wollombi Valley Sculpture Festival is regional NSW's largest and longest-running sculpture event, established in 2002. Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of NSW, serves as Patron. The 2026 festival offers a prize pool of more than \$80,000 across 12 non-acquisitive prizes, the most significant of any regional NSW festival. The festival is entirely volunteer run, supported by a team of more than 100 volunteers.